

Lake County Youth System Refresh

FULL REPORT

Introduction

The leadership of the Lake County Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Development Department jointly engaged in a community-driven system refresh process to improve the breadth and scope of the county's youth workforce development system. Lake County is fortunate to have a lower proportion (8.8%) of young adults (ages 16-24) who were neither in school nor at work, relative to the state (10.0%) and a few other surrounding counties (e.g., Cook, Racine, and Kenosha). According to the most recent data available (American Community Survey, 2019), however, there were 8,342 young adults in Lake County who were out-of-school and out-of-work, often referred to as "Opportunity Youth". Workforce Development's annual goal is to serve 100 Opportunity Youth (plus an additional 85 system-involved youth and 215 enrollees in the summer).

This analysis serves as a catalyst for the Workforce Board, Workforce Development Department staff, educational leaders, community partners and community members to agree on a vision of developing a workforce system that will meet the needs of more young adults in Lake County; increase the services to those most in need (juvenile justice, foster, and probation youth); and create momentum to collaborate and integrate resources to serve young adults more comprehensively in the area.

Lake County has over 94,000 young adults (16-24) who will be the future local and regional workforce. As such, it is critically important that all these young adults can participate in the future economy which makes it even more important to reach the Opportunity Youth population. As disastrous of an impact that COVID-19 had on the national economy, it had an even more detrimental impact on certain workforce sectors of the economy: young adults, women, and those with lower educational and skill levels. It is imperative that all Lake County residents have the opportunity to be prepared for the new economy and obtain the educational and technological skill levels for the ever-changing employer demands.

New Ways to Work is grateful for the opportunity to provide this executive summary with the full report shortly forthcoming. We look forward to our continued partnership aimed at building an enhanced youth workforce development system in Lake County. The objectives of this executive summary are threefold:

- 1) Provide the most recent available data on Lake County's young adult population
- 2) Collect feedback and input from diverse stakeholders
- 3) Provide recommendations on the process and design of the future system

Overview

In the following sections of the report, we first provide an overview of the methodologies used by New Ways to collect data from various youth system stakeholders. We then present general and specific data on Opportunity Youth in Lake County. Next, we move into a discussion of the key themes and opportunities that emerged from our analysis of the data we collected. Following this, we present a summary of the current youth system in Lake County. In the next section of the report, we provide a detailed discussion of key policy recommendations for improving the youth workforce system. Finally, we close the report with information on best practices developed and/or implemented by youth

workforce systems in three other locations around the country: Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and San Diego.

Additional data, information, and resources are included in the attachments. These are listed below:

- *Attachment I:* Complete demographic and youth data for Lake County
- *Attachment II:* Map of youth service providers around the county
- *Attachment III:* Recommendations for resources and potential partnerships

Methodology

In line with the objectives of the project, we collected data from multiple sources via various methods. Some of the data we relied upon was archival (i.e., already existing), whereas other pieces of data we collected specifically for this project. Below, we provide a table that summarizes the data we used to inform this report. And in the following sub-sections, we add some additional information for each of the methodologies.

Table 1. Data Used to Inform Report Findings and Trends

Method/Data Type	Description and Purpose
Archival Data	Existing data was used primarily to build the Lake County community profile and summarize the data on Opportunity Youth in the region. A variety of sources were used to locate these data.
Stakeholder Interviews	We conducted 24 interviews with stakeholders from educational partners, WDD staff and board members, youth serving agencies, and youth providers. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information about how the current youth system in Lake County works and gain various perspectives on system successes and strengths, opportunities for expansion, and overcoming key obstacles.
Focus Groups	Focus groups were held with the Employer Connection Committee, The Talent Pipeline Committee, and WDD youth support staff. Overall, the purpose of these efforts were to learn and understand how the youth workforce system works and identify a series of opportunities for further expansion and improvement.
SWOT Analysis	Members of our team conducted a SWOT analysis with WDD staff to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the youth contractors and system as a whole.

Archival Data: Organization and Analysis

The archival data we organized and analyzed generally fell into one of two categories, (1) documentation relating to current programming, and (2) demographic data we collated, organized, and analyzed from various online sources.

Stakeholder Interviews

Between two New Ways team members, 24 interviews were conducted. Nine individuals worked at educational partners, eight were WDD staff or board members, four worked at youth serving agencies, and three are Executive Directors at youth service providers. The interviews typically lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted either in person or via Zoom (or phone call). Appendix II includes a list of each of the interviews we conducted with stakeholders.

Lake County Disconnected Youth Data

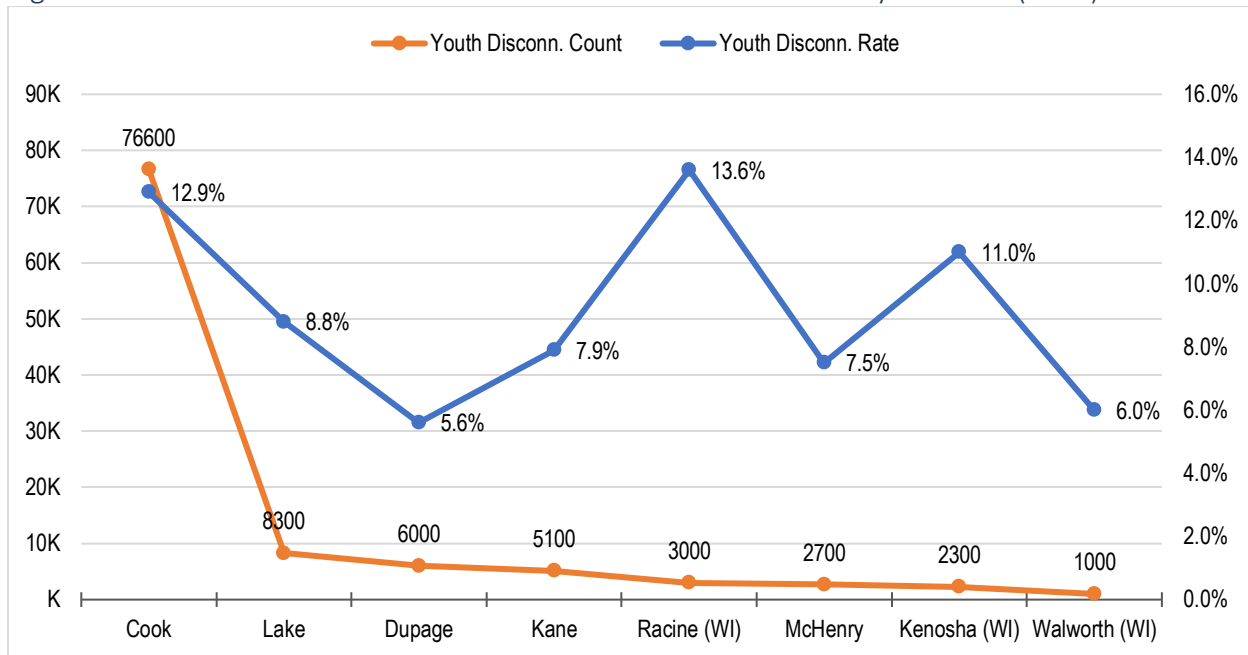
In 2019, there were 94,524 young adults between the ages of 16-24 (ACS, 2019, 5-Yr Estimate), and over half (54.8%) were male. Just under six in ten (59.9%) young adults were enrolled either in a public or private educational institution, and the labor force participation rate for 16–24-year-olds was 63.5% (employed + unemployed; 59,986). Those who were not in the labor force (34,538) were mostly attending school (85.2%). Of the 94,524 young adults in the county, **8.8%% (8,342) were neither enrolled in school nor working (i.e., disconnected)**, and over half (53.3%) were male.

Table 1. Education- and Employment-Related Data (16-24-year-olds; 2019)

		School			
		No School in Last 3 Mos.	Attends Public School/College	Attends Private School/Private College/Home School	Total
Work	Employed at Work	23,832	18,467	46,14	46,913
	With a job but not at work	169	202	87	458
	Armed Forces, at work	5,535	297	166	5,998
	Unemployed	3,231	2,868	518	6,617
	Not in labor force	5,111	24,324	5,103	34,538
	Total	37,878	46,158	10,488	94,524

During the same time in 2019, the youth disconnection rate for Illinois was 10.0% (148,600), and the rates and counts in the counties around Lake County are shown below in Figure 3. Cook County has far more disconnected youth (76,600) and a higher disconnection rate, relative to most other counties shown below. Although Lake County is home to the second most disconnected youth in the area, the disconnection rate is relatively low.

Figure 3. Youth Disconnection Counts and Rates of Lake and Near-By Counties (2019)



Source: Measure of America (2019). The disconnected count data are estimates, thus there is some rounding.

In 2020, Measure of America (MoA) grouped each of the country's 2,400 public use micro data areas (PUMAs) into eight different community types based on two variables: youth disconnection and population density. In addition to the community types, the data shown in Table 2 provide the youth disconnection rates for each of the five PUMAs in Lake County. Below are MoA's descriptions of the three different community types found in Lake County:

- Opportunity Rich Urban America (Opp. Rich. Urban; 2): *"Diverse communities located primarily in thriving sections of major metropolitan areas that are well served by public services."*
- Opportunity Rich Sub-Urban America (Opp. Rich. Sub-Urban; 1): *"Primarily white, comparatively affluent suburban communities with strong education systems."*
- Moderately Connected Urban America (Mod. Conn. Urban; 1): *"Highly diverse communities in and around large and mid-sized cities, with uneven access to educational and job opportunities."*

As shown in the table below, four of the five PUMAs have lower youth disconnection rates than the state of Illinois (10.0%). The data also show that four of the five PUMAs were considered "Opportunity Rich", indicating that educational and employment opportunities and access to services are readily available. Whereas the Waukegan, Zion, Benton, & Newport Townships have the highest disconnection rate and are home to a third (32.9%) of the disconnected youth population in the county, the Warren, Libertyville and Shields Townships have the highest number of 16-24-year-olds, a relatively low disconnection rate but are still home to close to a quarter (23.7%) of the county's disconnected youth.

The percentages in the right-most column can and should inform the allocation of resources intended for young adults in the different areas.

Table 2. Youth Disconnection by Lake County PUMAs (Measure of America, 2019)

Public Use Microdata Area	Community Type	Disconn. Youth Count	Youth Count (16-24)	Disconn. Rate	% of Total Disconn. Youth
Waukegan, Zion, Benton, & Newport Townships	Mod. Conn. Urban	2746	19553	14.0%	32.9%
Avon, Lake Villa, Antioch & Grant Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	1913	20678	9.3%	22.9%
Warren, Libertyville (North & East) & Shields Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	1975	27008	7.3%	23.7%
Ela, Freemont, Wauconda & Cuba Townships	Opp. Rich Sub-Urban	892	13068	6.8%	10.7%
Vernon, Moraine, West Deerfield & Libertyville (Southeast) Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	816	14217	5.7%	9.8%
ALL PUMAs		8324	94524	8.8%	100%

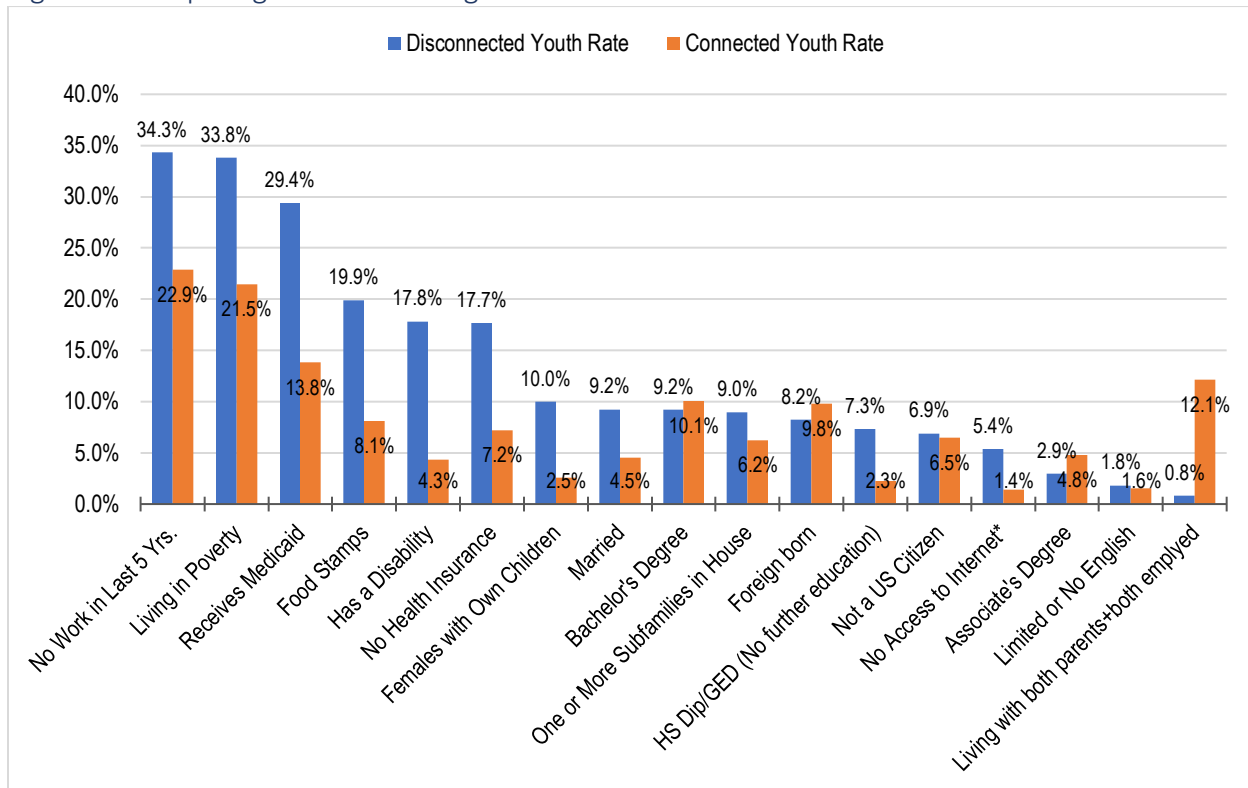
Young adults, ages 16-24, who are neither in school nor working tend to be significantly disadvantaged relative to their connected counterparts. This is not a surprise given that these youth are removed from two institutions that would otherwise provide a strong foundation for the important experiences, and development and nurturing of critical life skills. In Figure 4, we compare disconnected and connected youth on a number of situational variables. As shown below, disconnected youth are **significantly more likely** to:

- Not have ever worked or not worked in the past five years
- Live in poverty
- Receive Medicaid
- Receive food stamps
- Have a disability
- Be married
- Have children (disconnected females)

Additionally, disconnected youth are **much less likely** to:

- Continue their education beyond high school
- Have access to internet
- Have health insurance
- Live with parents who are both employed

Figure 4. Comparing and Contrasting Disconnected and Connected Youth



Homelessness among Young Adults (16-24)

To obtain data on homeless young adults in Lake County, we directly contacted the Community Development Advisor, Lake County Community Development Department. There are various definitions of homelessness, but for the purposes of these data, we used the definition put forth by the Department of Housing and Urban Development:

- (1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
- (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;
 - (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or
 - (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

Table 3. Annual Homelessness Counts (Ages 16-24)

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Total (Unduplicated)	119	92	91	85	75	82	56

Note: Youth at domestic violence shelters are not included here. A privacy law prohibits entering client information into a shared database.

Consolidated Themes from Interviews, Focus Groups, and SWOT Analysis

In addition to the quantitative data organized and analyzed above, a major piece of the youth system refresh effort included a series of conversations facilitated by New Ways team members. Over the course of just a few months, two New Ways team members conducted 24 interviews with educational partners, service providers, and WDD staff and board members, two focus groups, and a SWOT

analysis. Hearing themes more than once and from multiple individuals tends to be a good indicator of agreement. In general, the themes that emerged generally fell into one of five categories:

1. Workforce Development Department
2. Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships
3. Resources
4. Knowledge and Processes
5. Youth Service Delivery

The themes we include below and the recommendations we provide later should be viewed in the context of serving more youth in the county, and therefore, we frame each of the emergent themes as opportunities for strategic, practical, and administrative improvement and growth. We start off by emphasizing a few of the most apparent opportunities, and then move into a discussion of other important opportunities. We learned from the interviews that the largest opportunity relates to serving more youth. This was brought up several times by stakeholders. Another major opportunity that emerged relates to youth system services and infrastructure. There are great services for young adults in Lake County, and some of the services are getting stronger. There is an enormous opportunity to both improve the services and increase the number of youth served. To seize and optimize this opportunity, the infrastructure of the youth system can and should be improved further.

“There should be just one door for the youth to walk through to gain entry into the system - a portal.”

1. Workforce Development Department

Like any other interdependent system with multiple stakeholders, the Lake County youth workforce system will be most effective when there is regular communication and coordinated and cooperative planning, implementation, and follow up. At the head of this growing network is the WDD that is committed to the youth and to continuous improvement, thus laying a strong foundation on which to further build an even stronger and more comprehensive system. We learned to achieve these goals, there are some changes that can be made internally at WDD. Themes that emerged related to making changes include establishing shared goals that everyone commits to, establishing consistent communication between internal stakeholders solidifying the role of WDD as the guiding and supporting force, promoting and fostering connections between community members, and utilizing outcomes as measures of success.

2. Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships

We learned from stakeholders that there are multiple opportunities to improve communication,

“The overall system seems to be communicating better and continues to improve significantly”

collaboration, and partnerships. We also heard that though improvement is already being noticed by stakeholders, there is more to do. One of the most important pieces of a strong youth workforce system is the consistent involvement of educational institutions, both secondary and post-secondary. The engagement

of unified school districts and community colleges in the youth workforce system helps to ensure that more young adults are connected to these crucially important institutions. Stakeholders also shared that there can be more consistent collaboration and partnerships with the private and industry sectors – while some agencies and service providers may have strong connections with the private and industry sectors, others have little to no connections.

In general, stakeholders noted that there are indeed some extremely strong and impactful partnerships, and we observed the potential for many more to develop. As this happens, it will be increasingly important to ensure that there are many opportunities for everyone to “sit at the table” all together. Partnerships are essential, but the full range of benefits can only be realized when everyone can meet to exchange information and ideas.

“We are not sitting collectively at the table to think about root causes and how to build out pipelines.”

3. Resources

Another overarching theme that emerged relates to resources. Overall, we observed that the “system” has resources, but there is potential to deploy them more effectively and appropriately. Stakeholders emphasized opportunities to close resource gaps in mental health, transportation, childcare, undocumented youth, and foster youth.

4. Processes and Tools

The fourth category of themes is about the important processes and tools within the youth program that may help, or hinder, program effectiveness and efficiency. One theme we heard in the interviews is related to a critical process, participant and youth on-boarding. Specifically, we learned that stakeholders feel that youth on-boarding should be reviewed and streamlined. When not done efficiently, on-boarding can lead to losing the opportunity to help young adults in need. Relatedly, some stakeholders expressed the need for stronger method of identifying Opportunity Youth in the county. In particular, some stakeholders called for an increased focus on the development of a system-wide outreach plan/strategy that communicates a singular message to young adults around the county. As alluded to above, identifying disconnected youth in the county can made be easier to the extent that WDD and service providers increase the number of partnerships with youth serving organizations and institutions that also serve this population. In addition to finding the youth, we also heard the need for better processes to track youth once they are in the system. To the extent that each of the processes above are developed in collaboration with service providers and communicated regularly by WDD, the system as a whole stands to benefit greatly. The foundation for all of these processes is undoubtedly related to the final theme in this category – the wealth and depth of knowledge that the WDD has. Lastly, stakeholders shared that contract management can be improved, and that doing so results in more time and resources for serving youth.

“We need to track the populations and use the data to continue to support our decisions..”

5. Youth Service Delivery

The fifth and final category of themes is related to youth service delivery. Overall, the ability of the system to serve youth can be greatly improved if the system is more proactive, rather than reactionary.

“We need a youth network designed to voice what they need.”

In this regard, some stakeholders proposed that this transition hinges upon better understanding the interests and needs of the young adults they serve and intentionally delivering services and resources that are aligned with those interests and needs.

Opportunities for employment, training, and career exploration can be (at least somewhat) curated for the youth. We also learned that the Summer Youth Employment Program is an effective program, and that more youth may be reached by more fully leveraging it and its resources.

Description of the Current Workforce Development Youth System

The Lake County Workforce Board has designed a WIOA youth program model – a program based on an integration of services delivered among and across multiple partners including the Workforce Development Department and the Job Center of Lake County. The program model takes into consideration the delivery and accessibility to the fourteen (14) required WIOA program elements and accessing the services of Workforce Development to refer youth and young adults to additional employment and training services including post-secondary education and paid work-experiences. The WIOA funded youth programs serve both in-school and out of school youth with a service plan goal of 185 in 2021-2022 and an annual budget of \$1.4 million. The Summer Youth Employment Program has an annual service plan goal of 215 with an annual budget of \$260,000.

Program services and activities include recruitment, assessment, training, education, work-based learning, and employment retention elements; in addition to career exploration, training and education leading to credential and work-based learning opportunities. The Youth System provides the following grant funded youth programs as well as programs supported by the Workforce Board and administered by Workforce Development:

- The WIOA Youth Comprehensive Career Pathway Program (delivered by sub-recipients)
- Bring Your 'A' Game
- Career Crossroads (delivered by sub-recipients)
- Individual Training Accounts
- Subsidized Work-Based Training
- Lake County Summer Youth Employment Program

Recommendations

In this section, we provide descriptions of high-level policy and strategy recommendations for review by the department and the Workforce Development Board. To further address ways in which Lake County and its partners and service providers can serve more youth, we include information on some of the best practices currently being implemented in Los Angeles. Finally, we close this section with other recommendations that we hope spur important discussions among stakeholders.

Lake County Workforce Development Board contracted New Ways to Work in September 2021 to provide technical assistance and professional support in the development of the procurement process for the Workforce Development Youth System. New Ways to Work was charged with the formulation of the Youth System refresh process, including community and program assessments, potential program design and development options, stakeholder strategy discussions, and staff/contractor training.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND PROFILE: New Ways to Work gathered and prepared demographic, workforce, and education profiles, labor market information and community resources within Lake County. This data was used to develop a profile to provide services for the young adults in the county.

INTERVIEW TARGET POPULATIONS: New Ways to Work interviewed/surveyed the target population, young adults ages 16-24. The goal of the interviews was to gain an understanding of their needs, career interests, real and perceived barriers, unique circumstances, and support (or lack thereof) from foster,

probation, and homeless care systems. The interviews were conducted in individual and groups settings and included youth both served and not served by the current system.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS/ROUNDTABLES: The workforce development system is not a stand-alone program and depends heavily on partnerships and collaborations. Interviews were conducted with current and potential future partners. Interviewees included representatives of schools and alternative schools, community colleges, Workforce Development Board committee members, Department of Rehabilitation, community-based representatives, and parents.

SERVICE DELIVERY/GAP ANALYSIS: New Ways to Work analyzed the current service delivery system and completed a service gap analysis that identified geographic/demographic and resource opportunities to further improve services available to young adults in the region.

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS/RESOURCES were identified to improve the quality and quantity of service delivery. This includes partner/funding resources that can be integrated into the new program design model.

PROGRAM REDESIGN OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES: It is anticipated that the Lake County Workforce Development Board will revisit program designs, build upon continuous improvement aspects, and take into consideration new program design models that contain clear and achievable short-term and long-term goals. The program design process will benchmark against best-in-class youth programs and will inform future requests for proposals, as well as aim to increase the number of young adults served in Lake County.

1. Areas for improvement can change over time and measuring progress toward goals is consistently important. Therefore, we suggest conducting both external and internal benchmarking studies to evaluate system progress and overall effectiveness.
2. Research has found the youth-led recruitment strategies, rather than strategies led by other stakeholder groups, can be more effective. In this regard, we suggest that for each of the three youth populations of interest (i.e., foster, justice-system involved, and homeless), at least one concrete youth strategy be deployed system-wide.

[Policy Recommendations](#)

The vision of the Lake County Development Board is to develop a comprehensive youth workforce development system serving a greater number of Opportunity Youth and system-involved young adults in Lake County. A comprehensive youth serving system is a formal network that provides the foundation for an equitable and coordinated system that meets the needs of youth. Institutions and organizations that support young people apply a youth development approach in all their activities and services. Community Stakeholders are engaged in efforts to support the lives of youth and promote effective collaboration between and among system partners. Activities are intentionally sequenced and coordinated, resources are leveraged, and a connected operational infrastructure is in place. The policy recommendations are divided into two categories:

1. Strategic Direction
2. Internal Administration

Strategic Direction Recommendations

The Strategic Direction recommendations provide the Workforce Development Youth System with a foundation for an equitable and coordinated system that meets the need of youth. The recommendations include:

1. ESTABLISH A SYSTEM APPROACH VERSUS A STAND-ALONE CONTRACT APPROACH.

Establish an integrated service delivery infrastructure by developing and strengthening partnerships with organizations that currently serve the Opportunity Youth population. The collective impact model offers a framework for building an integrated service delivery system focused on serving a greater number of disconnected youth. The model includes five conditions that define systems capable of successfully solving complex social issues and will inform future requests for proposals:

- *Common Agenda:* a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions
- *Shared Measurement System:* agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported
- *Continuous Communication:* consistent and open communication across collaborators structured to build trust, establish mutual objectives, and provide motivation
- *Mutually Reinforcing Activities:* differentiated activities that leverage the capacities of participating organizations, coordinated through a mutually reinforcing action plan
- *Backbone Support Organization:* Lake County Workforce Development Department leads the system and its collaborative efforts with a focus on monitoring the system's performance. Lake County should offer a menu of potential involvement levels for prospective partners with options ranging from an organization simply being "kept in the loop" as a potential service provider in the future, to an organization providing capacity to aid in system-wide planning and service provision.

2. ESTABLISH A YOUTH SYSTEM COLLABORATION MODEL THROUGH NON-FUNDED MOUs.

The youth system should develop and establish System-Wide Strategic Partnerships (Memorandums of Understanding) with the following youth serving systems:

- Local secondary schools
- Career pathways programs (Private & Post-Secondary Institutions)
- Higher educational institutions
- Juvenile and adult justice systems
- Legal aid organizations
- Local housing/homeless programs
- Lake County Departmental System Services
 - a. Social Services
 - b. Children and Family Services
 - c. Education
 - d. Behavioral Health
 - e. Homeless Partnership
 - f. Transportation Authority

Additionally, establishing MOUs with groups of employers can address the need for more private and industry sector engagement and increased work- and career-related opportunities for the youth. And

given that one of the more important needs for some of the youth is obtaining work experience, one potential solution may be to establish relationships with local temp agencies.

- 3. FRESH AND NEW MARKETING/OUTREACH.** Forthcoming programmatic and strategic changes for the Lake County Youth System, we suggest a new and fresh marketing and outreach campaign that will attract more service providers and more young adults.

Internal Administration Recommendations

The administrative recommendations are based on improving the youth workforce system operational structure and programmatic outcomes. These recommendations include:

- 1. CONDUCT INTERNAL MAPPING SESSION.** Misalignment and role ambiguity can (and often do) happen over time. One potential strategy that has been effective in addressing this and making the necessary adjustments is a mapping session. In the session, WDD would visually map the various roles and tasks of each role. Such a session can bring clarity to both roles and tasks and show what is being done and what remains to be done.
- 2. PROGRAM DELIVERY REDESIGN.** Redesign existing program model to provide Youth System contactors and providers with greater responsibility and accountability for client outcomes.
- 3. CENTRALIZE OUTREACH AND MARKETING STANDARDS.** The outreach and marketing standards need to be centralized to develop and maintain youth workforce system standard of operations in relations to specific program areas. They include:
 - Outreach / Marketing
 - Social Media
- 4. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS.** Partnerships are essential in providing comprehensive services. By building more effective reciprocal partnerships, integrated services across agencies will build strong relationships that will facilitate collaboration and increased service delivery.
- 5. REDESIGN THE INTAKE PROCESS.** Redesign the intake process to retain more participants and make referrals more effective. It was observed that many young adults who initially inquire about the program do not complete the intake process.
- 6. ESTABLISH REGIONAL COLLABORATION.** Establish meetings where youth system providers, WDD staff, partners, service providers and community stakeholders can convene monthly to discuss youth needs and challenges they face, share resources, and network.
- 7. ESTABLISH A QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROCESSS.** A system wide Quality Management process for continuous improvement will utilize agency data to provide on-going feedback and process improvement. The QM Process principles are:
 - *Customer-Focused:* Quality of service and performance are determined by the customer, in this case the youth served.
 - *Total Employee Involvement:* All employees participate in working toward common goals; success relies upon wide-spread employee commitment and empowerment.

- *Process-Centered*: A focus on process thinking for turning inputs into outputs; continually monitor performance measures to identify performance gaps.
- *Integrated System*: All employees must know, understand, and buy into the mission and vision.
- *Strategic and Systematic Approach*: Service quality must be explicitly emphasized in, and incorporated into, the strategic plan.
- *Continual Improvement*: Analytical tools and creative thinking are used to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- *Communications*: A well-defined and unambiguous communications strategy and approach characterized by accuracy, efficiency, and timeliness.

8. INCREASE USE OF VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING SERVICES. A system policy should be established encouraging the use of virtual services for the young adult population. Given the high number of disconnected young adults in the county and the vast distances between service providers, the use of technology as a strategy needs to be further developed for both service delivery and staff training.

Los Angeles Youth Workforce System

In 2016, the Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3) created a comprehensive service delivery system that coordinated multiple layers of services being provided to disconnected youth ages 16-24, who were: high school dropouts, in the probation system, in foster care, homeless, or disconnected from school and work. The LAP3 attempted to align and coordinate City and County of Los Angeles programs, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Los Angeles Community College District, State Employment Development Department, and other public and private agencies to serve these at-risk youth populations.

Importantly, the LAP3 was based on two granted waivers: (1) U.S. Department of Labor Waiver: WIOA Title I Youth Consider foster, justice-involved, homeless and runaway youth who are in school to be counted in the 75 percent out-of-school youth service category for fiscal accounting purposes; (2) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Waiver: Transitional Living Program The HHS Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY) has granted the LA LGBT Center a waiver to increase the eligibility ages for youth in its transitional living program from 21 to 24. (*Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (P3): 2017-2020 Strategic Plan Serving Disconnected Youth*, 2017).

As part of the LAP3 evaluation, educational- and employment-related outcomes were compared for two groups: (1) youth who participated in the LAP3 intervention through 14 YouthSource Centers (YSCs) around the City of Los Angeles, and (2) youth who were part of WIOA-funded programs operated separately by the County of Los Angeles.

In addition to the waivers and the compressive services delivered through multiple agencies and organizations, LAP3 also comprised a few key elements that ultimately led to significant and positive outcomes for those youth who were part of the program.

- In each YSC, there was a Pupil Service Attendant counselor (PSA; an LAUSD employee) charged with assessing youths' educational needs and helping them return to school

- As part of LAP3, YSCs were instructed to serve each youth coming through their doors – regardless of WIOA enrollment status. Not all services were available to non-WIOA youth, but some were.
- A significant part of the intervention was monthly regional meetings where the partners in a specific region, such as East Los Angeles, met to exchange information and discuss individual cases and how agencies could coordinate to help youth in problematic situations.

Philadelphia Youth Workforce System

Philadelphia Works innovatively redesigned their overall service delivery model and youth services, now viewed as best practice. Researched with evidence-based solutions and measurable objectives; they are seeing early positive outcomes. Mathematica has a podcast on the Philaworks.org website documenting the design and implementation of the new strategies that they call the “quarterback for supporting the workforce system”. Some of the concerns that led to their engagement of Mathematica and the redesign of overall delivery for adult and youth included:

- The four job centers had too many opportunities for customers to fall off the track during intake
- Compliance mindset at the agency had prevented staff from looking at what people really needed
- The compliance mindset confused who to go to, there were multiple points of contact
- Staff were not being cross trained
- Funding took place with multiple service providers and oversight

Improvements have taken place in the last two years. Meeting weekly, teams of staff feel they are now making a direct difference. One of the huge improvements is the reduction in paperwork – 30 application pages has been reduced to six. The collaborative responsible for the redesign has begun to meet individuals where they are. These transformative practices can be seen on the ground every day, and providers are fully brought in. Two of the youth workforce system highlights include growing the provider networks and increasing the capacity of the system. New strategies have also begun for youth in the seventh grade. A podcast is located on the website that provides a great deal of detail. It is under the innovations section.

San Diego Youth Workforce System

The youth workforce system in San Diego has also developed and implemented some key best practices. First designed and implemented in 2021, “The goal of our new San Diego County youth workforce development system is to help young San Diegans align their interests and skills with education, training and fulfilling jobs that will help them launch a meaningful career create a better life for themselves and their families.” The San Diego Workforce Partnership believes that this initiative will empower these young workers to find the intersection between what they love to do, their skillset, what they can be paid for and what area employers are seeking in an employee.

Interestingly, the research from San Diego shows that most opportunity youth are high school graduates, thus, they suggest that youth disconnectedness increases as youth leave high school and try to determine what to do next. In the materials on the website, one can link onto detail from their most recent *Disconnected Youth Convening* for some event insights. Career center services are available, especially to youth disproportionately affected by the recent and current COVID landscape, and overall career environment:

- Black youth

- Youth experiencing homelessness
- Immigrant, refugee and/or English language learner youth
- Justice-involved youth
- Foster youth

The Connect2Careers (C2C) partnership in San Diego involves a wide range of partners covering the city including:

- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- City of San Diego
- County of San Diego
- Gap, Inc.
- Hyatt
- The James Irvine Foundation
- San Diego Gas & Electric
- Vista Unified School District
- Walmart

C2C direct youth activities include:

- Innovative youth programming,
- Development and support of career goals
- Work readiness training
- Case management
- Job coaching
- Paid work experience

Conclusion

As a result of its commitment to young adults in the region, the Lake County Workforce Development Board and its administrative agency, the Workforce Development Department, contracted with New Ways to Work to conduct a large-scale “refresh” of the youth workforce system. This report is the culmination of months of work, in which New Ways organized and analyzed quantitative data on Opportunity Youth in Lake County and used additional existing data to build a profile of the community as a whole. Qualitative data was also collected from youth workforce system stakeholders through interviews and focus groups, and a SWOT analysis.

These various pieces of data, along with the various policy, youth targeting, and marketing recommendations and proposed resources and partnerships (Attachment III) provide the WDB and WDD with a better understanding of the Opportunity Youth in Lake County, as well as a resource they can use to build an improved system that reaches more youth in all parts of the county. This document will serve as an important and useful reference as this critical work continues.

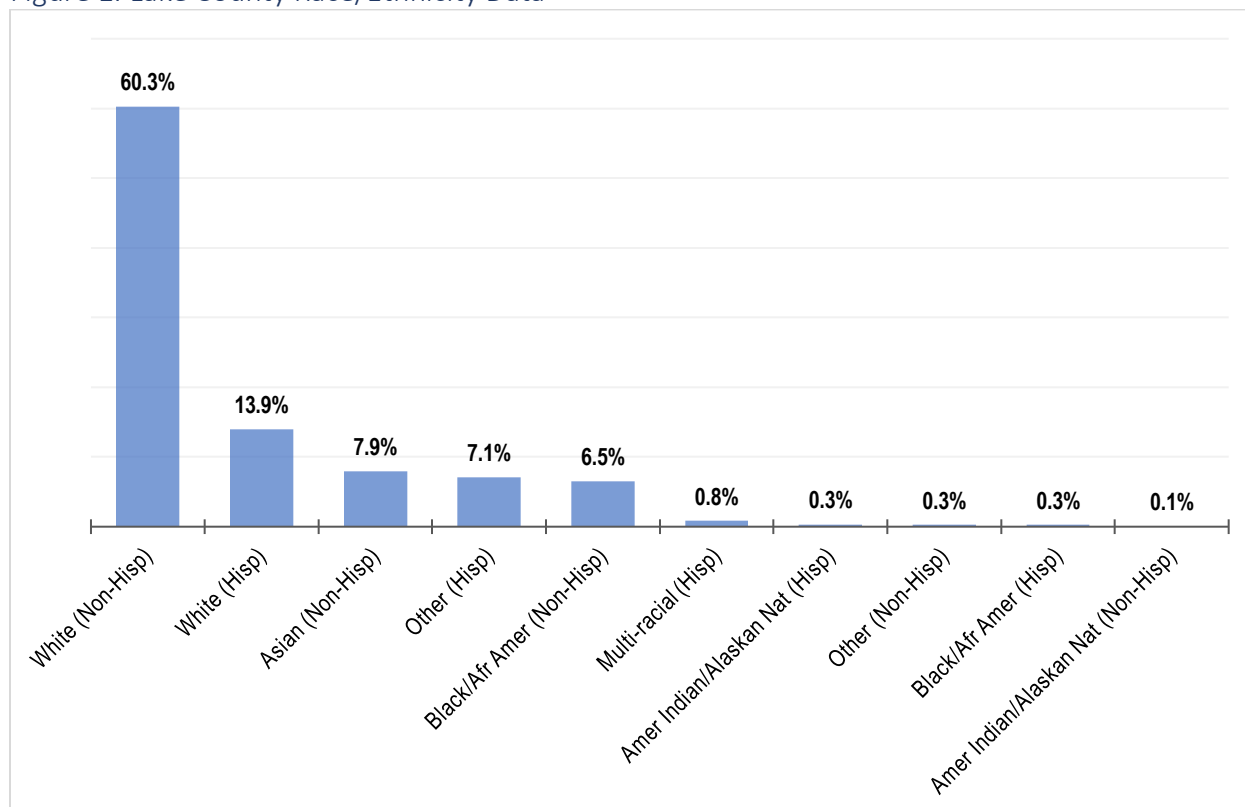
ATTACHMENT I

Lake County Data

General Demographic Information

Situated in northeastern Illinois, Lake County covers 443.9 square miles, and is home to 714,342 people (US Census Bureau, 2020), making it the third most populous county in the state. Between 2010 and 2020, population growth was approximately 1.5% and is expected to grow at a similar rate over the next decade. Whereas the majority of residents are White (Non-Hispanic; 60.3%), White (Hispanic) comprise 13.9% of the total population, followed by Asian (Non-Hispanic; 7.9%), Other (Hispanic; 7.1%), and Black (Non-Hispanic; 6.5%). As of 2019, approximately 22.4% of the people in Lake County were Hispanic. Figure 1 below shows the full racio-ethnic composition of Lake County.

Figure 1. Lake County Race/Ethnicity Data

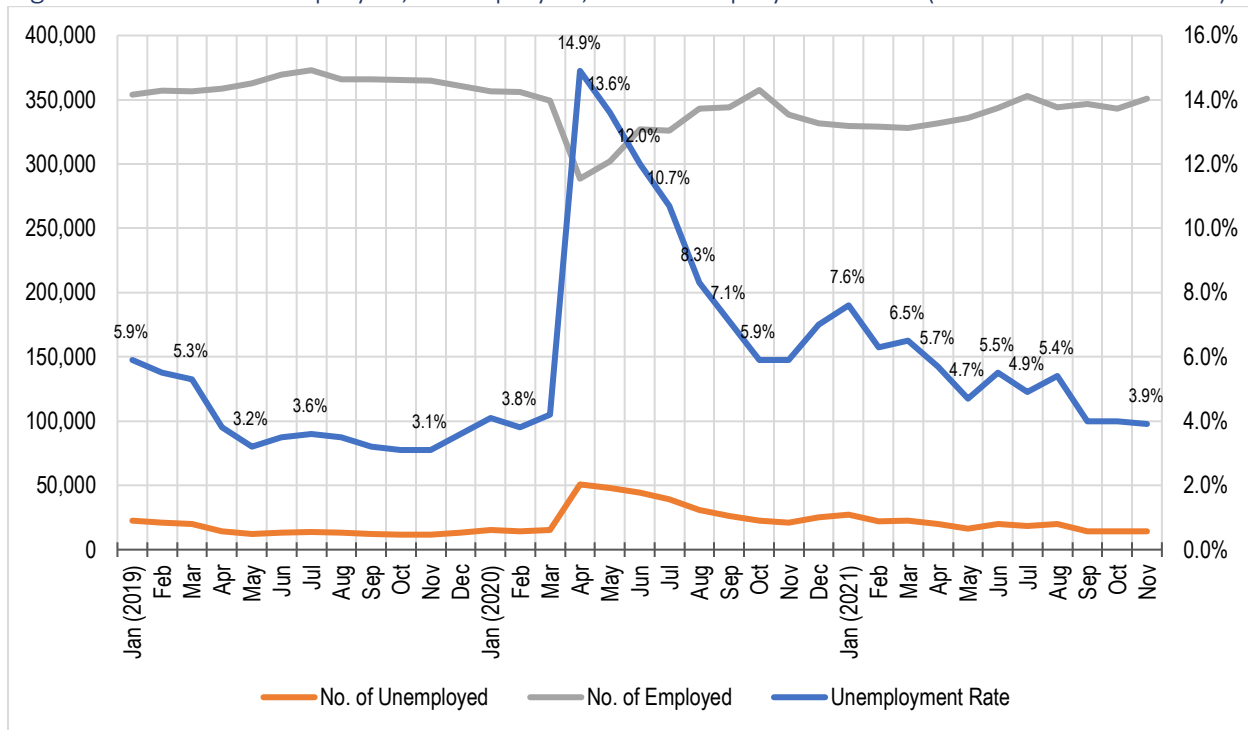


In 2019, there were approximately 253,386 households and 2.7 persons per household. Close to one in five (18.8%) adults 25 and older held at a graduate or professional degree, while over a quarter of adults held a bachelor's degree. Just over six percent (6.3) held an associate's degree, 18.2% had some college (no degree), 20.8% had a high school diploma or equivalent, and 9.4% had less than a high school diploma. The median income per household was \$89,427, and per capita income over the previous 12 months was \$45,766. The overall poverty rate was approximately 7% and the child poverty rate was 18%.

Labor Market Summary

As in every other part of the state and country, the Lake County labor market was significantly and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The table below shows the number of employed and unemployed individuals (age 16 and above) in Lake County, every month from January 2019 to November 2021. The unemployment rate in the county spiked from 3.8% in February 2020 to 14.9% just two months later. This coincides with state's COVID-19 stay-at-home mandate. Fortunately, as of November of 2021, the unemployment rate had returned to pre-pandemic levels, but recovery has been challenging. These unfortunate economic circumstances and large fluctuations were difficult for many county residents, but particularly challenging for disconnected youth in the region.

Figure 2. Number of Employed, Unemployed, and Unemployment Rate (Jan. 2019 – Nov. 2021)



Disconnected Youth

In 2019, there were 94,524 young adults between the ages of 16-24 (ACS, 2019, 5-Yr Estimate), and over half (54.8%) were male. Just under six in ten (59.9%) young adults were enrolled either in a public or private educational institution, and the labor force participation rate for 16-24 year olds was 63.5% (employed + unemployed; 59,986). Those who were not in the labor force (34,538) were mostly attending school (85.2%). Of the 94,524 young adults in the county, **8.8%% (8,342) were neither enrolled in school nor working (i.e., disconnected)**, and over half (53.3%) were male.

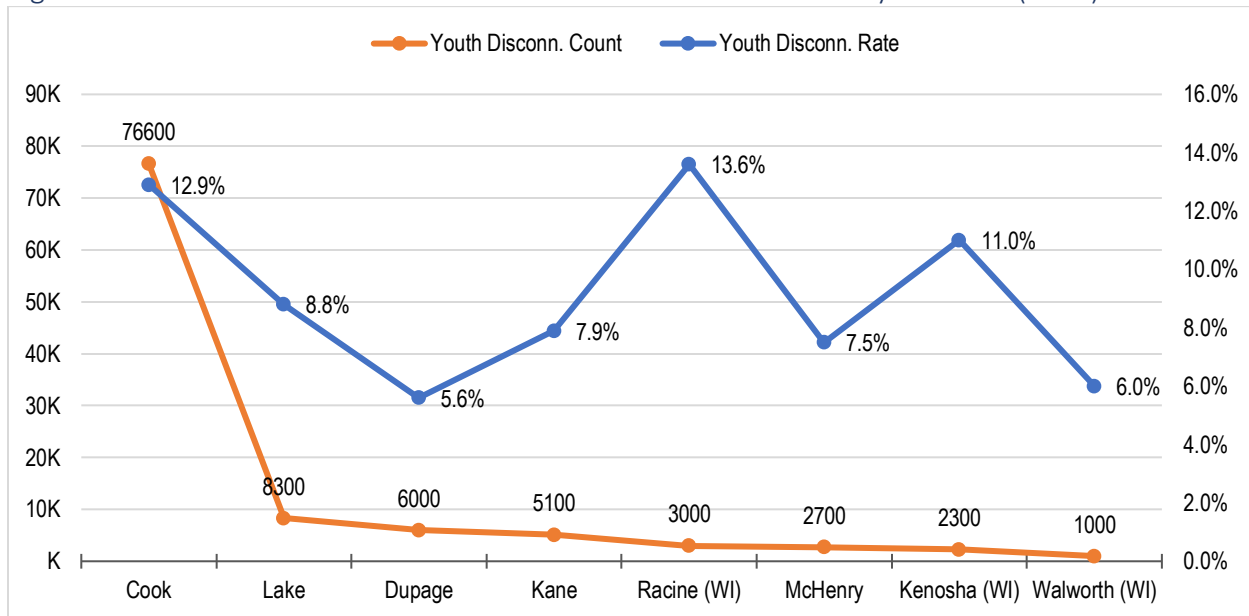
Table 1. Education- and Employment-Related Data (16-24-year-olds; 2019)

School			
No School in Last 3 Mos.	Attends Public School/College	Attends Private School/Private College/Home School	Total

Work	Employed at Work	23,832	18,467	46,14	46,913
	With a job but not at work	169	202	87	458
	Armed Forces, at work	5,535	297	166	5,998
	Unemployed	3,231	2,868	518	6,617
	Not in labor force	5,111	24,324	5,103	34,538
	Total	37,878	46,158	10,488	94,524

During the same time in 2019, the youth disconnection rate for Illinois was 10.0% (148,600), and the rates and counts in the counties around Lake County are shown below in Figure 3. Cook County has far more disconnected youth (76,600), relative to all other counties shown below. Although Lake County is home to the second most disconnected youth in the area, the disconnection rate is relatively low.

Figure 3. Youth Disconnection Counts and Rates of Lake and Near-By Counties (2019)



Source:

Measure of America (2019). The disconnected count data are estimates, thus there is some rounding.

In 2020, Measure of America (MoA) grouped each of the country's 2,400 public use micro data areas (PUMAs) into eight different community types based on two variables: youth disconnection and population density. In addition to the community types, the data shown in Table 2 provide the youth disconnection rates for each of the five PUMAs in Lake County. Below are MoA's descriptions of the three different community types found in Lake County:

- Opportunity Rich Urban America (Opp. Rich. Urban; 2): *"Diverse communities located primarily in thriving sections of major metropolitan areas that are well served by public services."*
- Opportunity Rich Sub-Urban America (Opp. Rich. Sub-Urban; 1): *"Primarily white, comparatively affluent suburban communities with strong education systems."*

- Moderately Connected Urban America (Mod. Conn. Urban; 1): *“Highly diverse communities in and around large and mid-sized cities, with uneven access to educational and job opportunities.”*

As shown in the table below, four of the five PUMAs have lower youth disconnection rates than the state of Illinois (10.0%). The data also show that four of the five PUMAs were considered “Opportunity Rich”, indicating that educational and employment opportunities and access to services are readily available. Whereas the Waukegan, Zion, Benton, & Newport Townships have the highest disconnection rate and are home to a third (32.9%) of the disconnected youth population in the county, the Warren, Libertyville and Shields Townships have the highest number of 16-24-year-olds, a relatively low disconnection rate but are still home to close to a quarter (23.7%) of the county’s disconnected youth.

The percentages in the right-most column can and should inform the allocation of resources intended for young adults in the different areas.

Table 2. Youth Disconnection by Lake County PUMAs (Measure of America, 2019)

Public Use Microdata Area	Community Type	Disconn. Youth Count	Youth Count (16-24)	Disconn. Rate	% of Total Disconn. Youth
Waukegan, Zion, Benton, & Newport Townships	Mod. Conn. Urban	2746	19553	14.0%	32.9%
Avon, Lake Villa, Antioch & Grant Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	1913	20678	9.3%	22.9%
Warren, Libertyville (North & East) & Shields Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	1975	27008	7.3%	23.7%
Ela, Freemont, Wauconda & Cuba Townships	Opp. Rich Sub-Urban	892	13068	6.8%	10.7%
Vernon, Moraine, West Deerfield & Libertyville (Southeast) Townships	Opp. Rich Urban	816	14217	5.7%	9.8%
ALL PUMAs		8324	94524	8.8%	100%

It is well-known that young adults, ages 16-24, who are neither in school nor working tend to be significantly disadvantaged relative to their connected counterparts. This is not a surprise given that these youth are removed from two institutions that would otherwise provide a strong foundation for the important experiences, and development and nurturing of critical life skills. In Figure 4, we compare and contrast disconnected and connected youth on a number of situational variables. As shown below, disconnected youth are **significantly more likely** to:

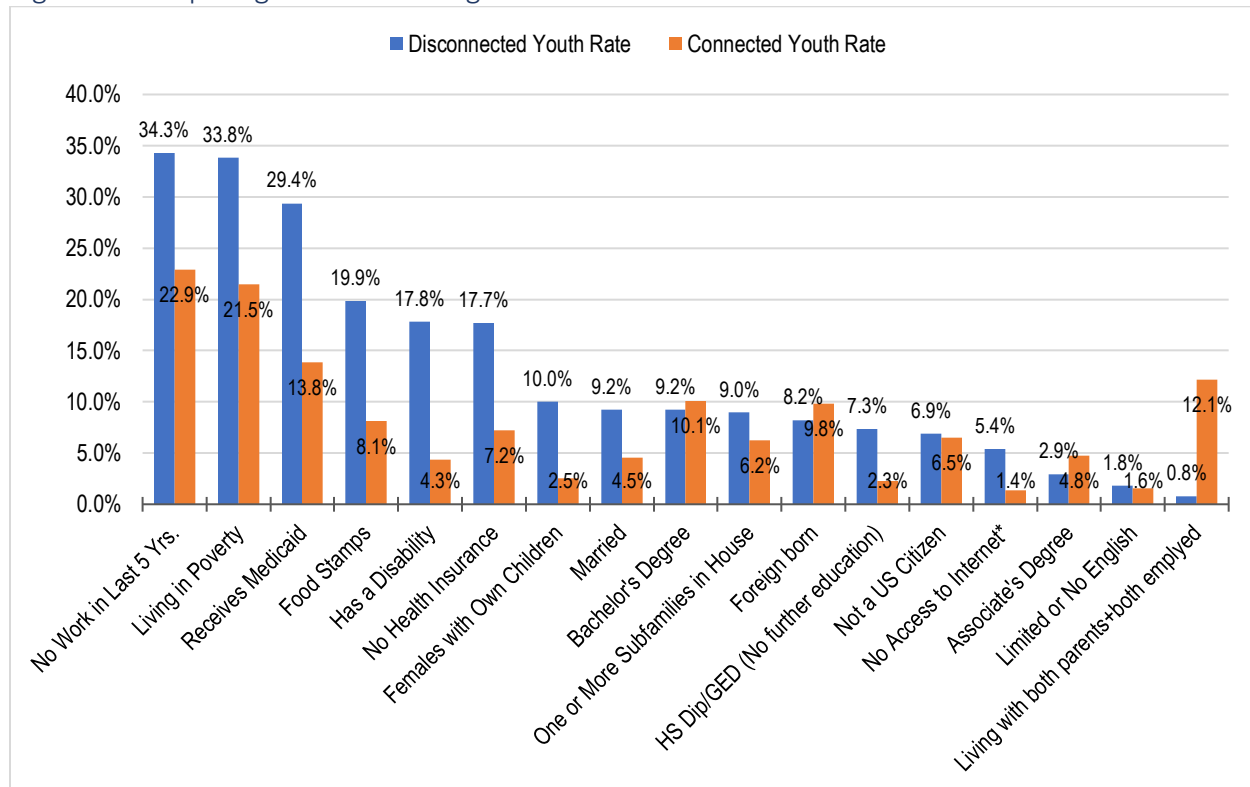
- Not have ever worked or not worked in the past five years
- Live in poverty
- Receive Medicaid
- Receive food stamps
- Have a disability
- Be married

- Have children (disconnected females)

Additionally, disconnected youth are ***much less likely*** to:

- Continue their education beyond high school
- Have access to internet
- Have health insurance
- Live with parents who are both employed

Figure 4. Comparing and Contrasting Disconnected and Connected Youth



Homelessness among Young Adults (16-24)

In order to obtain data on homeless young adults in Lake County, we directly contacted the Community Development Advisor, a county employee. There are various definitions of homelessness, but for the purposes of these data, we used the definition put forth by the Department of Housing and Urban Development:

(1) *Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:*

- (i) *Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;*
- (ii) *Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or*
- (iii) *Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution*

Table 3. Annual Homelessness Counts (Ages 16-24)

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Total (Unduplicated)	119	92	91	85	75	82	56

Note: Youth at domestic violence shelters are not included here. A privacy law prohibits entering client information into a shared database.

Food Insecurity in Lake County

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), food insecurity refers to a lack of “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life”. Feeding America conducts its annual *Map the Meal Gap* study to better understand food insecurity and the costs at the local level. In 2019 (the latest published data), overall, there were 49,020 people in Lake County who were food insecure (7.0% insecurity rate). In the same year, 12,830 children were food insecure (7.5% insecurity rate).

Furthermore, 16% of the food insecure children were likely income ineligible for federal nutritional programs. In the same year, the average meal cost was \$3.41, and the annual budget shortfall was \$28,587,000. Food insecurity in the overall population has increased slightly since 2017 but has decreased for children over the same period.

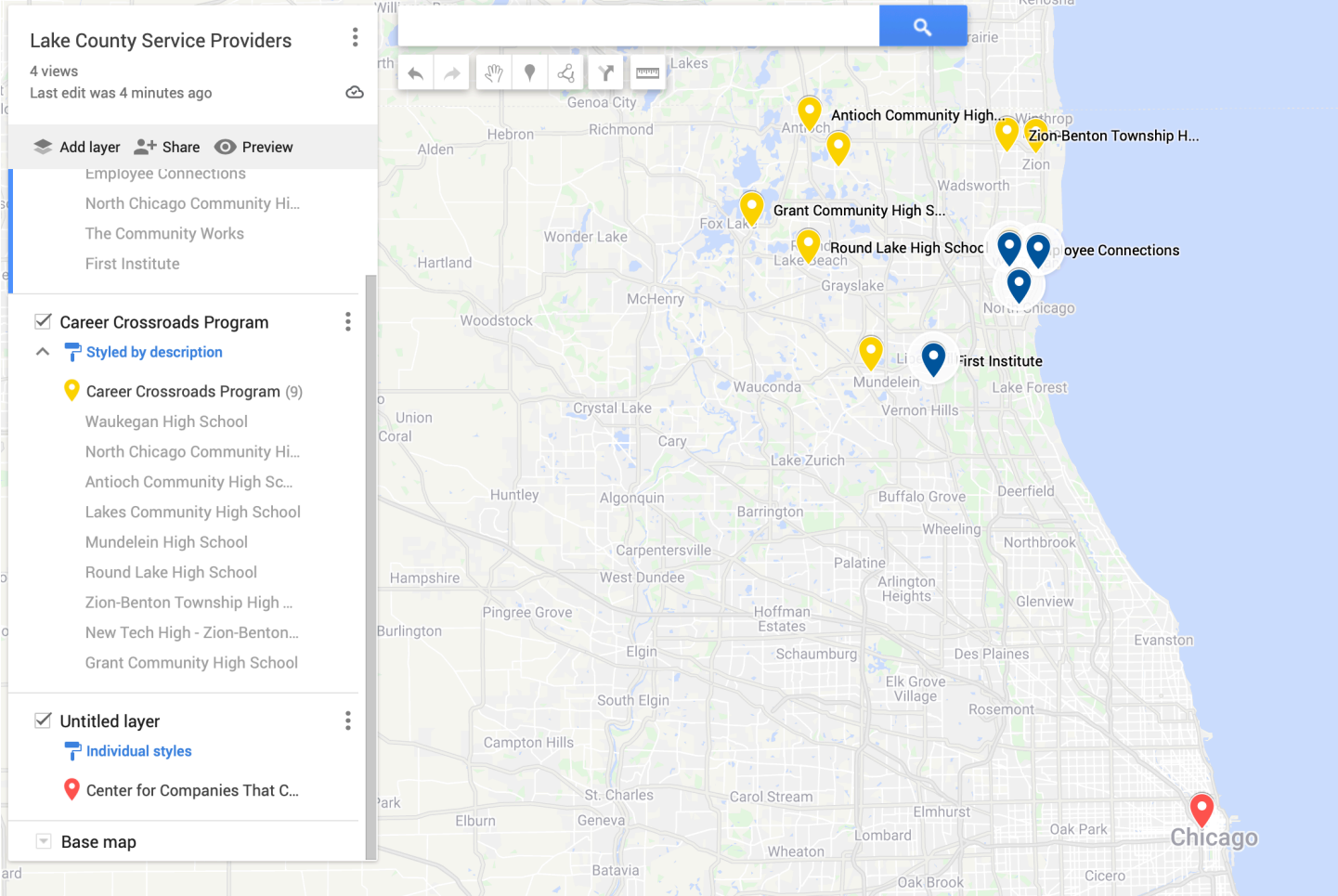
As of yet, food insecurity data for 2020 and 2021 has not yet been collected. Feeding America, however, has released a companion study wherein they project food insecurity rates for both years. The projected 2020 food insecurity rate for children was 12.3% and in 2021 it was 9.6%. The projections for overall insecurity were 9.7% and 8.3%, respectively. These increases from 2019 are a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4. Food Insecurity in Lake County

Year	# of Food Insecure People		Food Insecurity Rate		Average Meal Cost	Annual Budget Shortfall*
	Overall	Children	Overall	Children		
2021**	--	--	8.3%	9.6%	--	--
2020**	--	--	9.7%	12.3%	--	--
2019	49,020	12,830	7.0%	7.5%	3.41\$	\$28,587,000
2018	48,730	14,420	6.9%	8.3%	3.29\$	\$27,163,000
2017	45,980	21,530	6.5%	12.2%	3.23\$	\$25,326,000

*Note: Indicates the total annualized additional dollar amount food-insecure individuals reported needing, on average, to buy just enough food to meet their needs.

**Note: Projected rates



Attachment III – Potential Partnerships and Resources

Throughout the interview process, individuals made mention of resources they had, ones they were aware of and ones they need. Below some of these are categorized. They may turn out to be excellent partners, potential RFP applicants, or they may be great supplemental community resources.

The listing below focuses more on suggested categories. Unlike many regions, the present youth delivery system in Lake County received positive praise for the strength of their partnerships and the wide net used to capture potential partners, while still naming additional opportunities. We hope they will allow you to expand the system's reach to support more youth.

1. Faith-Based organizations are utilized by many of the providers in an informal way, but many also noted that it would be great to be more inclusive of them and the contributions they are making to the futures of the youth.

- My Father's Business Church: 2722 Sheridan Rd, Zion, IL www.zionasis.com, 847-731-7319
- Catholic Charities
- St. Patrick's Church: Lake County Youth Mentoring program (they mentor a younger group, but very organized. Maybe they would partner to extend to an older age), 991 Waukegan Rd., 847-234-1401
- One Hope United Church, 1790 Nations Drive, St 116, Gurnee, 847-245-6544, onehopeunited.org. There is also a One Hope United church in Waukegan.
- OMNI Youth Services: 1111 Lake Cook Rd., Buffalo Grove, IL
- Churches in general were named as a resource we need to cultivate in all our communities. It was named through the CLC that a group of Pastors had been invited to participate in a meeting prior to COVID. Re-invigorating that effort would support strong partnerships with the resources of the church community.

2. Public Entities may come with a bit more paperwork and process, but also provide consistent resources that can support the young people. Interviewees also named state entities that it would be important to partner with. Ones that have been named specifically are:

- Illinois CTE Education: <https://www.isbe.net/cte>
- Illinois Department of Education: <https://www.illinois.gov/education.html>. The interest here was potential involvement of Workforce engaging in education policy related to youth
- Lake County Department of Health: <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/148>

Very **Specific Supportive Resources** are going to shift by local community, but can be sought out to align with the needs of the individual youth in an area.

- Legal Aid, especially around integration
- Organizations dealing with trafficking
- Family Assistance programs
- Childcare organizations
- Domestic Violence organizations
- HeadStart – interviewees named the need to begin with early childhood, and young parents of children at the childcare
- Organizations where youth basic needs can be met
- Independent Living program with extended foster care

- Reliable transportation
- Consumables from food to other items
- Boys/Girls Clubs

Three opportunities noted as important are:

- Girl Wise Event: Girl-Wise Yearly Symposium | Lake County, IL
<https://lakecountyil.gov/3340/Girl-Wise-Yearly-Symposium> The 19th Judicial Circuit and the Lake County Juvenile Justice Council continue to partner with agencies in the community to present the annual Girl-Wise Conference.
- North Chicago Community Partners – Strengthening Communities through Schools, <https://northchicagocommunitypartners.org>, 855 N Skokie Highway, Lake Bluff, IL 60044 847-582-1358

Foster Care Resources were named as an area that needed additional partnerships. Several opportunities are:

- [Foster care resources | Free Foster Care Resources | aecf.org](#), <https://www.aecf.org/foster-care>
- [Foster Care Program Expands into Lake County - Little City](#), <https://littlecity.org/foster-care-program-expands-into-lake-county>
- [CASA Lake County \(IL\)](#) – <https://casalakecounty.com/menus/why-casa.html>

3. Health Related Organizations served several purposes. They could be the partner providing a supportive service, partnering as an industry employer or offering an apprenticeship/training. This relationship is a way to understand trending health issues, such as the mental health of the youth.

- Family clinics/ local health clinics
- Lake County Health Centers
- Local Hospital

Several organizations specifically named by interviewees:

- Behavioral Health Services Physical Address 3010 Grand Avenue Waukegan, IL 60085 Phone: 847-377-8180 Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Crisis Care Program . Mental Health was lifted up numerous times by interviewees as a partnership needed, especially on a sliding scale that could accommodate the youth population.
- Family Service of Lake County- pregnancy services, 777 Central Avenue, Suite 17, Highland Park, IL 60035, 847-432-4981

4. Industry and Employer Partners are a vast group. Some providers had databases of employers in the hundreds and others with only a few. The consensus was that there needs to be partnerships with a wide variety of employer partners in all locations. HR departments are as critical in this as the direct supervisors of the youth.

- Northwest Medical
- Potential industry HR departments- develop an HR hotline that they can call for information
- Hydro Force and Wyland
- Manufacturers Council
- Mom and Pop businesses
- More employers in the Advanced Manufacturing sector
- IT employers

- Snap-on Tools

Several that stood out from the group as being great potential partners are:

- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (a part of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce) – www.lakecountychamber.com/HispanicChamber, 847-249-3800
- Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Business – assistance to Hispanic businesses, www.lhccbusiness.net

5. Innovative partnerships that could be implemented and expanded include the:

- Military
- Union Apprenticeships- provide MC3 training to the youth prior to entrance
- Entrepreneurial skills training
- Peer to Peer Mentorship and other mentoring programs- additional mentoring services were often mentioned

Two here worth connecting with:

- New Program! RISE-UP – a new program of the College of Lake County
- Curt's Café – an innovative training program for individuals coming out of incarceration, Susan Treichman, Executive Director

6. Education partnerships are mentioned by most every provider. Investigating opportunities for dual credits was articulated by several. Here are some categories suggested for additional partnership:

- Community and Technical Colleges
- Bridge programs- I-CAPS Bridge Program
- Apprenticeships
- Additional trades partnerships
- Potential instructors and educational staff are also noted as a resource need
- Scholarship funds for out of school youth
- Participation in CLC College Day Events

An educational partnership worth connecting with:

- Canvas Learning Management System of College of Lake County – www.clcillinois.edu 847-543-2000

7. Outreach, marketing, visibility, and recruitment partners can help defray costs and get the word out.

- Local TV and radio
- Spectrum
- Chamber of Commerce Newsletters, especially the Hispanic Chamber
- Church bulletins

8. Additional funding resources are always needed to support projects.

- Funding grants for non-traditional students
- Scholarships for out of school youth
- Interested foundations

Several interviewees suggested that investigating opportunities for restorative justice programs was important.