



Introduction:

The mission of the Jefferson Regional Foundation (JRF) is to improve the health and well-being of the 26 municipalities served by AHN Jefferson Hospital within Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. These communities comprise areas within the lower Mon Valley and parts of the South Hills. The Foundation is a convener of people and networks, a source for community-driven data, and a grant maker that works to help reduce community based social determinants of health. The Foundation's strategy on how to impact community health and wellness includes intentionally leveraging resources and broad partnerships to address social determinants while also centering community voice and the experiences of residents.

Following discussions between key community stakeholders and JRF leadership, and in recognition of the importance of collaboration, the Foundation seeks to engage with partners to explore potential areas of collective effort and share resources for the purpose of achieving long-term health improvements. In alignment with and in complement to the 2024-2028 JRF strategic plan, the Foundation is sharing a review of public health statistics and qualitative insights from community engagement efforts that could inform future action.

The community engagement strategies included active listening and thought partnership with the recognition that community voice is necessary to identify, prioritize and create solutions for community health needs. Consequently, the Foundation initiated a process to gather qualitative data by engaging in discussions/interviews with:

- A small sample of Mon Valley residents whose neighborhoods have a lower health index score
- Health care providers
- Nonprofit partners
- And grantee organizations

The Foundation team also gathered local health data of communities within the service area from public sources and compared them to available county, state, and national information. These combined efforts enabled the staff to identify health disparities in communities within the JRF footprint. As a result of both qualitative and quantitative information, the following conditions were elevated and identified as prevalent factors impacting community health within the service area of the Foundation:

- Cancer diagnosis rates
- Prevalence of asthma
- Prevalence of food insecurity

A closer examination of this data reveals that the aforementioned health factors are particularly present within the Mon Valley communities of the Foundation's footprint.

Cancer:

The overall percentage of adults that have been diagnosedⁱ with cancer (excluding skin cancer) in Allegheny County was 9% in 2022 (the most recent data available), according to CDC PLACES data pulled from the Allegheny County Health Department.ⁱⁱ This is higher than the overall USA

rate at 8.2%. Within the Foundation’s footprint, 15 of the 22 municipalities for which data is available have overall cancer rates higher than the County’s overall rate of 9%.ⁱⁱⁱ

The table below highlights overall adult cancer rates in the 22 municipalities for which data is available. Rows that are highlighted show communities where the overall adult cancer rate is higher than the County’s rate of 9%.

Table 1: 2022 Adults with Cancer in JRF Communities

Community (22)	Adults with Cancer (%)	2022 Population 18+^{iv}	% of JRF 18+ Population	Potential Adults w/Cancer^v
Lincoln	11.2%	865	0.5%	97
Bethel Park	10.9%	27,052	15.8%	2,949
Pleasant Hills	10.6%	6,933	4.1%	735
Dravosburg	10.4%	1,480	0.9%	154
Port Vue	10.1%	2,968	1.7%	300
West Homestead	10.1%	1,480	0.9%	149
Whitehall	10.1%	12,359	7.2%	1,248
Versailles	10.0%	1,327	0.8%	133
West Mifflin	9.9%	15,475	9.1%	1,532
Jefferson Hills	9.8%	9,810	5.7%	961
Liberty	9.7%	1,792	1.0%	174
Baldwin	9.5%	17,209	10.1%	1,635
Munhall	9.3%	8,840	5.2%	822
Glassport	9.2%	3,487	2.0%	321
Elizabeth Boro.	9.1%	1,170	0.7%	106
Allegheny County	9.0%	1,013,922	n/a	91,253
West Elizabeth	8.7%	361	0.2%	31
Whitaker	8.7%	978	0.6%	85
Clairton	8.5%	4,892	2.9%	416
McKeesport	8.5%	13,878	8.1%	1,180
Brentwood	8.0%	7,699	4.5%	616
Homestead	7.4%	2,207	1.3%	163
Duquesne	7.0%	3,825	2.2%	268

Adult cancer rates are highest in Lincoln, Bethel Park, Pleasant Hills, Dravosburg, Port Vue, West Homestead, and Whitehall according to this data.

According to 2018-2022 data (the most recent available) from the PA Department of Health, the rate of all cancers for residents under the age of 20 in the state is 20/100,000 residents, which is higher than the rate for Allegheny County at 18.7/100,000 residents. However, the rate of cancer for White residents under the age of 20 is higher in Allegheny County (20.8/100,000 residents) than the State (20.1/100,000 residents). The same is also true for Black residents under the age of 20. At the State level, the rate of cancer for Black residents under 20 is 14.5/100,000 residents, while in Allegheny County the rate is 16.6/100,000 residents.^{vi}

An analysis of 2022 cancer death rates in the service area from data assembled by the Allegheny County Health Department reveals that cancer death rates vary across the service area from a high of 352.9/100,000 residents in Glassport to 100/100,000 residents in Jefferson Hills.^{vii} Data is only available for eighteen of the Foundation’s twenty-six municipalities. Ten JRF footprint municipalities have a higher cancer death rate from 2022 than Allegheny County (152/100,000) and the State of PA (147.6/100,000) according to this data.^{viii}

Table 2: 2022 Cancer Death Rates in JRF Communities

Community	Cancer Death Rate 2022 (per 100,000 Residents)
Glassport	352.9
Munhall	254.8
Homestead	249.1
West Mifflin	237.5
Duquesne	227.7
Port Vue	204.4
McKeesport	179.4
South Park	178.3
Clairton	169.6
Brentwood	157.9
Allegheny County	152
State of Pennsylvania	147.6
Elizabeth Twp	141.9
Bethel Park	131.5
Baldwin Boro	129.2
Whitehall	128.3
Pleasant Hills	124.3
Jefferson Hills	100

Several municipalities, including Brentwood, Homestead, Duquesne, South Park, and Clairton have lower rates of cancer compared to the rest of the Foundation’s footprint, while having higher than average cancer death rates.

Asthma:

Local data provided by the PA Department of Health and the PA Healthcare Cost Containment Council suggests that certain zip codes in the Foundation’s footprint have disproportionately high rates of asthma hospitalization discharges. Specifically, zip codes 15025 (Clairton and Jefferson Hills), 15131 (McKeesport), 15133 (includes McKeesport, Liberty, Lincoln, and Port Vue), 15135 (McKeesport), and 15110 (Duquesne), have greater than 104 asthma hospitalization discharges per 100,000 residents in 2021-2022. These rates place in the highest quartile of rates in the state.^{ix}

Childhood Asthma:

According to a 2019 Allegheny County Department of Health report, approximately 11% of children in Allegheny County have asthma compared to 8% nationally.^x A 2020 study found that

the rate of asthma in schools close to industrial centers (average distance of the closest outdoor air pollution site in the cited study was about 2 miles from schools) was about 22.5%.^{xi} The Duquesne University Center for Integrative Health, supported by the Foundation, established school-based asthma clinics in the Mon Valley in the early 2020s as a response to observed increases in asthma. School clinics are in the Clairton School District, South Allegheny Elementary, Propel Hazelwood, and a school within the Woodland Hills School District. At the state level, approximately 14% of children have been diagnosed with asthma, according to 2022 data from the State of Pennsylvania Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).^{xii}

Additionally, asthma prevalence is higher among children with Medicaid according to the 2019 Allegheny County Asthma Task Force Report, which is the most recent report available. 9% of children with Medicaid in the County have asthma, compared to 8% of children with commercial insurance. 14% of Medicaid members with asthma had at least one ED visit in 2017, and 9% had at least one hospitalization. Only 4% of commercially insured children with asthma had one ED visit and 1% had a hospitalization.^{xiii}

Further, on a recent Allegheny County Asthma Task Force meeting call, Allegheny County Health Department staff identified McKeesport, Jefferson Hills, Clairton, Port Vue, and Wall as “High Priority Areas” where pediatric asthma hospitalization levels are highest in the County (greater than 50 per 100,000 residents) from 2019-2023.^{xiv} Additional areas outside of the Foundation’s footprint were also identified.

According to a 2019 ACHD report, there are also racial disparities in the asthma rates of children. The report suggests that 11% of Black children with Medicaid have asthma compared to 8% of White children with Medicaid.^{xv} Further, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that nationally among children, adults, and the total population, racial disparities exist in asthma diagnoses. For example, Black Children have an asthma rate of approximately 11.6%, while White children have an asthma rate of 5.5%. Black adults have an asthma rate of 10.7%, while White adults have an asthma rate of 8%.^{xvi}

Local data from the Allegheny County Health Department suggests that male children in Allegheny County, specifically Black male children, have the highest rates of asthma-related emergency department visits, and that rate is approximately 6x the rate of White children.

The 2023 Healthy Allegheny Teen survey, sent to 17 schools with 4,366 responses including from students at Steel Valley and West Mifflin High Schools in the Foundation’s footprint and East Allegheny and Woodland Hills High Schools in the Mon Valley Clean Air Fund footprint, indicated that 21% of students surveyed reported being diagnosed with asthma by a doctor or nurse. Further, racial disparities persist in this data as well. 25% of Black children and 20% of Hispanic/Latino children reported being diagnosed with Asthma compared to 19% of White children.^{xvii}

In a continuing effort to further assess the impact of asthma in our footprint, JRF recently signed an agreement with the PA Department of Health Bureau of Community Health Systems School Health Division to acquire school district-level asthma data to better understand childhood asthma in the Foundation’s service area. Data on childhood asthma rates is not publicly available, and the Foundation is grateful for this partnership.

Adult Asthma:

Approximately 16% of adults have been diagnosed with asthma state-wide, according to 2022 data from PA Department of Health’s BRFSS.^{xviii} This matches Allegheny County where 16% of adults have also been diagnosed with asthma.^{xix} Nationally, 8% of adults have asthma, according to the American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology.^{xx}

Food Insecurity:

Foundation partners regularly share concerns about food insecurity with staff. The Mon Valley Clean Air Fund (MVCAF) listening sessions identified food insecurity as a priority, and the Foundation has dedicated significant resources to addressing food insecurity through portfolio funds.

Almost 15,000 (16%) households in the JRF portfolio service area receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.^{xxi} This is higher than Allegheny County at 13% and the State at 14%. Rates of households receiving SNAP benefits in the service area range from 5% in Bethel Park to 49% in Duquesne. 15 of the 26 municipalities in the Foundation’s service area have a higher percentage of households that receive SNAP benefits than the County overall. Those communities are listed below. Together, these communities comprise almost 11,000 households, or about 16% of the almost 69,000 households in Allegheny County that receive SNAP benefits. Further, according to a 2025 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Study reviewing the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank’s footprint, one in three Black residents, one in four Hispanic Residents, and one in five children is food insecure.^{xxii} Recent alterations to SNAP benefit distribution add to the threat of food insecurity in the footprint.

Table 3: 2023 Households that Receive SNAP Benefits in the JRF Footprint

Municipality	SNAP Recipient Households	Total Households	% of Households receiving SNAP
Duquesne city	1,024	2,101	49%
McKeesport city	3,125	7,908	40%
Clairton city	881	2,635	33%
Homestead borough	395	1,437	27%
West Elizabeth borough	45	164	27%
Elizabeth borough	144	584	25%
Versailles borough	192	813	24%
Brentwood borough	1,039	4,478	23%
Munhall borough	1,155	4,992	23%
Forward township	293	1,338	22%
Port Vue borough	351	1,667	21%
Glassport borough	362	1,869	19%
Whitaker borough	99	536	18%
West Mifflin borough	1,466	8,499	17%

Liberty borough	159	1,063	15%
Dravosburg borough	111	844	13%
Allegheny County	68,986	546,507	13%
Pennsylvania	734,855	5,235,339	14%

Seven census tracts in McKeesport, Clairton, and Elizabeth are considered “low-income and low-access” (commonly referred to as food deserts) by the USDA, meaning that a significant portion of the population is both low income and has low access (nothing within 1 mile) to supermarkets with fresh healthy foods. The number of tracts almost triples (19) if access is considered within a ½ mile radius.^{xxiii}

Food insecurity was thrust into the spotlight on a national level following the delay in SNAP benefits in fall 2025. Additionally, the end SNAP-Ed benefits in September 2026 threatens to sunset nutrition education programs that reached about 2 million Americans every year as well as more than 150,000 Pennsylvanians in 2024 alone.^{xxiv, xxv} The Foundation has been approached by local partners working to identify components of SNAP-Ed programs that are most impactful and can be supported through other funding mechanisms.

According to data from United Way Southwestern PA 211, there were 506 requests for food support from residents of the Foundation’s footprint in 2024, representing about 5% of all calls from the Foundation’s footprint. As of September 30, 2025 there have been 582 request for food support from residents of the Foundation’s footprint, pointing to an increase in need.^{xxvi} The majority of these requests in 2025 have come from the zip codes 15132 (141 request- McKeesport), 15227 (89-Baldwin/Brentwood), 15120 (77-Homestead, Munhall, West Homestead, Whitaker), and, 15122 (55-West Mifflin), and 15025 (54-Clairton/Jefferson Hills).

Summary:

The Jefferson Regional Foundation (JRF) focuses on the social determinants of health and community health and wellness. Some of the most prominent issues impacting the social determinants and community health are access to transportation, healthcare, and basic needs which impact community health and wellness. Recent conversations with Mon Valley residents, healthcare providers, nonprofit partners, and grantee organizations as well as data gathered from public sources revealed health disparities in communities within the JRF footprint. Health disparities identified within this area include cancer, asthma, and food insecurity.

Local, County, and State data on cancer, asthma, and food insecurity reveals disparities in the Jefferson Regional Foundation’s footprint. Rates of adults with cancer are higher in much of the footprint compared to the County, asthma rates are comparatively high in the Foundation’s Mon Valley communities, and rates of SNAP usage are high throughout much of the service area. These issues have been cited by community partners and residents as particularly concerning.

McKeesport, Clairton, Dravosburg, West Mifflin, and Glassport, which are all Mon Valley communities, experience higher rates of adult cancer, cancer deaths, and SNAP usage than the County overall. Additionally, research suggests that rates of asthma in the Mon Valley among schoolchildren are significantly higher than the County overall. These disparities are the

manifestation of systemic challenges to already overburdened and under-resourced communities.

Statement of Position:

While the Foundation acknowledges the resilience of Mon Valley residents, they are faced with increased rates of cancer and asthma and higher rates of food insecurity. One of the primary goals highlighted within the Foundation’s strategic plan underscores the importance of considering a collaborative approach in order to support the current and emerging needs of the Jefferson Regional service area. A long-term plan that incorporates cross-sector partnership and community voice is necessary to facilitate transformational change. Therefore, efforts to consider collaborative opportunities that will offer measurable strategies to improve community health are a necessity.

Opportunities for Community Partnership and Intervention:

The Foundation welcomes the opportunity to engage in strategic discussions and leverage combined resources that will lead to actionable results in the improvement of health and well-being.

Recognizing the need to think broadly and creatively to impact health issues presented through this data, we are inviting you as a partner to co-create strategies and share resources that could address both the conditions present in communities as well as the root causes that lead to these disparities. The following are early ideas from community conversations that invite collaborative action:

Cancer:

- 1) Explore the provision of increased low/no-cost cancer screenings with transportation assistance and opportunities for follow-up care.
- 2) Discuss strategies to expand access to community-based cancer diagnostics and treatment by lowering patient out-of-pocket costs.
- 3) Explore expanded nutrition education, food distribution for residents with specific medical dietary needs, and tobacco cessation programming as cancer preventative measures.

Asthma:

- 1) Examine ways to expand access to free or low-cost asthma screenings and treatments, including inhalers, for underserved communities.
- 2) Expand community-based respiratory care to include school-based asthma clinics through collaboration of public, private and educational partners.
- 3) Provide community education and resources to minimize asthma triggers.

Food Insecurity:

- 1) Explore investments in resources that offer fresh, affordable produce.
- 2) Examine educational opportunities, including community and individual gardens that offer supplies and resources, especially in areas where raised beds are necessary due to environmental hazards.
- 3) Co-invest in food pantry networks.
- 4) Support community meal programs.
- 5) Expand investments in home delivered meals to include partnerships with healthcare providers and other community-based systems.

- 6) Explore opportunities to continue SNAP-Education programming in the Mon Valley due to the ending of SNAP-Education as of September 2026.

References

- ⁱ The indicator referenced here is “Ever told by a healthcare provider that they have cancer”. For simplification purposes, we have shortened this to “diagnosed”.
- ⁱⁱ 2022 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention PLACES data, accessed through <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Services/Health-Department/Community-Indicators-and-Health-Data>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Data from the source referenced in endnote i was not available for Elizabeth Township, Forward Township, and South Versailles
- ^{iv} US Census Bureau American Community Survey, Population and Housing Unit Estimates, 2022
- ^v This data was calculated by Jefferson Regional Foundation Staff by multiplying the percentage of adults with cancer by the population of adults in each municipality.
- ^{vi} PA Department of Health Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange (EDDIE) system, <https://www.phaim.health.pa.gov/EDD/WebForms/ChildhoodCancerCntySt.aspx>, accessed 1/13/2026.
- ^{vii} Allegheny County Health Department, Bureau of Data, Reporting, and Disease Control accessed at [Community Indicators and Health Data - Allegheny County, PA](#)
- ^{viii} Allegheny County Health Department, Bureau of Data, Reporting, and Disease Control accessed at [Community Indicators and Health Data - Allegheny County, PA](#)
- ^{ix} PA Department of Health Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk, January 2024, shared during Allegheny County Asthma Task Force September 2025 meeting, 9/11/2025
- ^x Allegheny County Health Department, 2019 “Asthma Task Force Report”, p. iv, [2019-asthma-task-force-report.pdf](#)
- ^{xi} [Study: Pittsburgh kids near polluting sites have higher asthma rates | StateImpact Pennsylvania](#)
- ^{xii} Pennsylvania Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2022, [BRFSSState](#)
- ^{xiii} Allegheny County Health Department, 2019 “Asthma Task Force Report”, p. v, [2019-asthma-task-force-report.pdf](#)
- ^{xiv} Allegheny County Health Department Asthma Task Force September 2025 Meeting, 9/11/2025
- ^{xv} Allegheny County Health Department, 2019 “Asthma Task Force Report”, p. 11, [2019-asthma-task-force-report.pdf](#)
- ^{xvi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019-2021, National Recent Asthma Data, [Most Recent National Asthma Data | CDC](#)
- ^{xvii} Allegheny County Health Department Asthma Task Force September 2025 Meeting, 9/11/2025
- ^{xviii} Pennsylvania Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2022, [BRFSSState](#)
- ^{xix} PA Department of Health BRFSS data, 2022, accessed through Allegheny County Health Department Community Indicators and Health Data dashboard. [Community Indicators and Health Data - Allegheny County, PA](#)
- ^{xx} American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology, 2023, accessed through <https://acaai.org/asthma/asthma-101/facts-stats/>
- ^{xxi} US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, data analysis performed by JRF staff
- ^{xxii} 2025 Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank State of the Foodbank presentation, data is from 2025 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Study using 2023 data.
- ^{xxiii} USDA Food Access Research Atlas: [USDA ERS - Go to the Atlas](#)
- ^{xxiv} PA Department of Human Services, <https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.psu.edu/dist/d/72901/files/2025/06/FY24-PA-SNAP-Ed-Infographic.pdf>
- ^{xxv} <https://civileats.com/2026/01/05/the-end-of-snap-ed-leaves-underserved-communities-with-even-fewer-resources/>
- ^{xxvi} Data provided by United Way of Southwestern PA