NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES NACo

June 2024

# The County Human Services and Education Landscape

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# Executive Summary

Regardless of population size, geography and available resources, counties are deeply invested in our residents' health and well-being. Every day, we provide services that help vulnerable individuals and families thrive, functioning as an integral part of the federal, state and local partnership in human service delivery. Whether keeping families sheltered when they face homelessness, providing nutrition support to infants and toddlers, operating job training programs, or protecting children from abuse and neglect, counties provide services that break cycles of poverty and help our residents thrive. The role of counties varies widely from state to state, but human services and education expenditures are among the largest parts of county budgets: every year, counties invest $62.8 billion in federal, state and local resources and employ 259,000 human services workers to provide safety net services for millions of residents. Additionally, counties spend $103 billion annually on elementary, secondary and post-secondary education.

While many federal human services and education programs are delivered as a partnership between the federal government and the states, certain states further delegate the administration of key safety net programs to county governments. However, county administration differs by program and can include a range of responsibilities, such as contributing administrative dollars, making eligibility determinations, delivering services or contracting with providers, determining how to spend program funds, contributing to Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and non-federal share requirements, collecting data to meet program requirements, enrolling program participants and more.

This resource provides a breakdown of the county, state and federal partnership key human services and education programs.

## Methodology

This report's assessment of the county role in program administration stems from a wide array of sources such as state plan submissions, state statute, federal reports, agency websites and direct feedback from county government officials. In some instances, we rely on inferences or estimations based on the best available data. Feedback and suggestions can be directed to Rachel Mackey, Legislative Director, Human Services and Education at **rmackey@naco.org.**

# Public Education

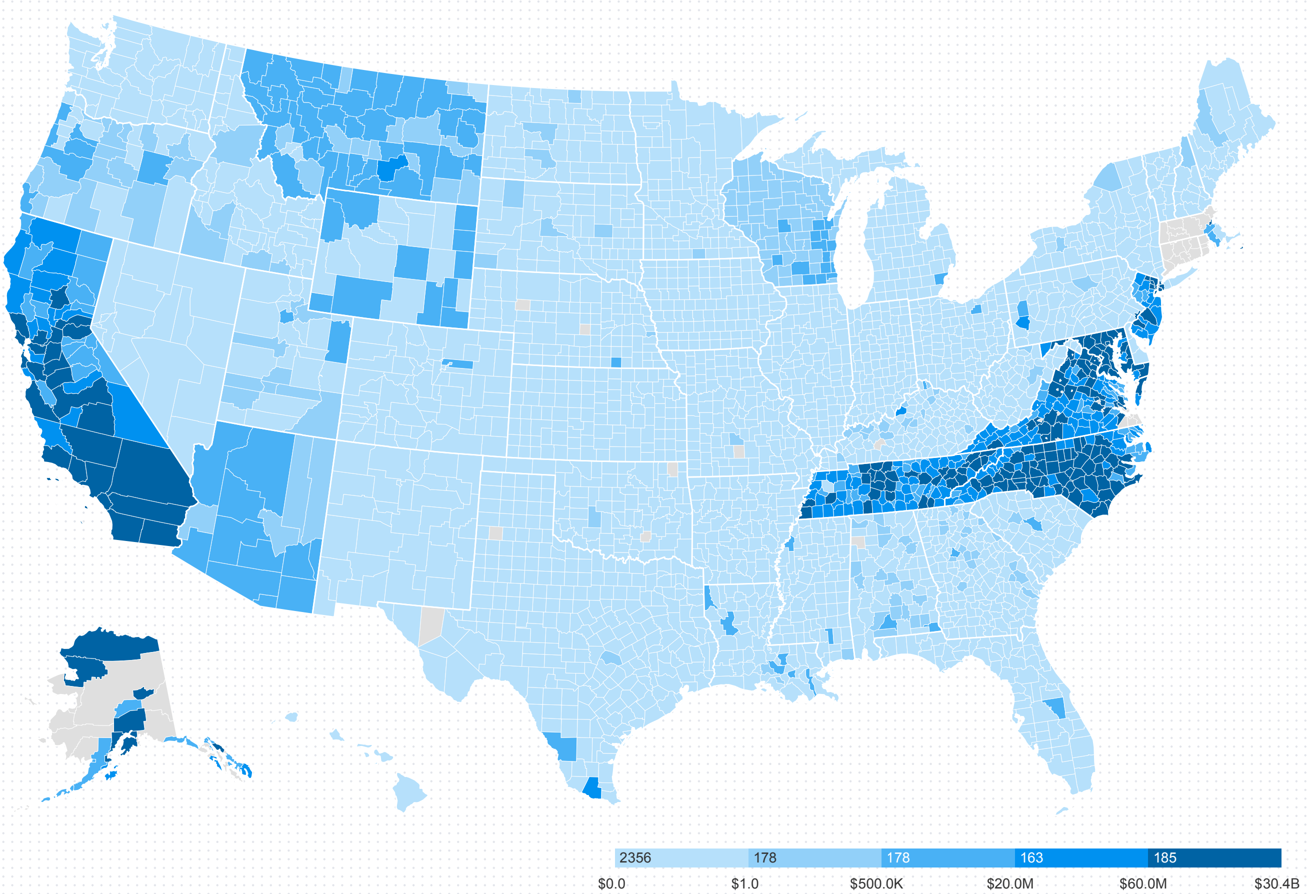
While the federal government enacts legislation and establishes policies that shape and fund education at the national level, education is primarily a state and local responsibility. States and communities, along with public and private organizations, establish and fund schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation.

## Elementary and Secondary Education

While K-12 education is generally a state and local partnership, the county role in that partnership varies, as most states designate authority to independently elected or appointed school boards. In almost all states, school districts are mandated to raise a certain amount of revenue for schools through property and other taxes, with the state providing the remainder.

Public school districts are only dependent on county governments in Alaska, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maryland and Virginia, meaning counties in those states have a statutory obligation to directly fund K-12 schools. Exceptions include unique educational settings such as agricultural extension schools, special or alternative education programs, vocational schools, which are in some instances dependent on county governments in

**COUNTY EXPENDITURES ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**




***Source:*** *NACo County Explorer, 2022*

Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey and Wisconsin. Additionally, the Coos County School district in New Hampshire is dependent on the county government.[1]

Counties may also contribute funds to K-12 public education in states where they are allowed to increase property taxes or impose sales taxes and excise taxes (often via voter referendum), the revenue from which can support K-12 education. Each year, counties invest an estimated $94.1 billion dollars in K-12 education.[2]

Even when counties do not play a direct role in funding K-12 education, we share a tax base with school districts and often provide complementary services to the same students through our other roles and responsibilities.

## Post-Secondary Education

Counties' decision-making authority in the post-secondary education sector varies; however, counties remain critical actors in driving integration and coordination, among human services, workforce, and economic programs and systems to strengthen career pathways for residents. Each year, counties invest $9 billion in higher education, including 2-year junior colleges or community colleges, 4-year universities and graduate schools, agricultural colleges, land grant institutions and other institutions granting post-secondary education degrees. Many counties also have career readiness or educational attainment initiative that partner with higher education.

Community colleges represent a significant area for county involvement. In 2023, 932 two-year public colleges served communities across the nation. Funded by a combination of tuition and public dollars, state and local contributions represent the largest share of community college revenue.[3] Local property taxes are overwhelmingly the main source of local funding for community colleges, though other taxes and appropriations from local school districts, cities and county governments also provide funding streams.

As with K-12 education, the county role in funding and operating community colleges varies. However, in New York, New Jersey, Maryland and North Carolina, community colleges are dependent on county governments. Counties in California, Mississippi, Michigan, Montana and Ohio may also play a more limited role in funding community colleges and/or technical and vocational schools.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE REVENUES BY SOURCE

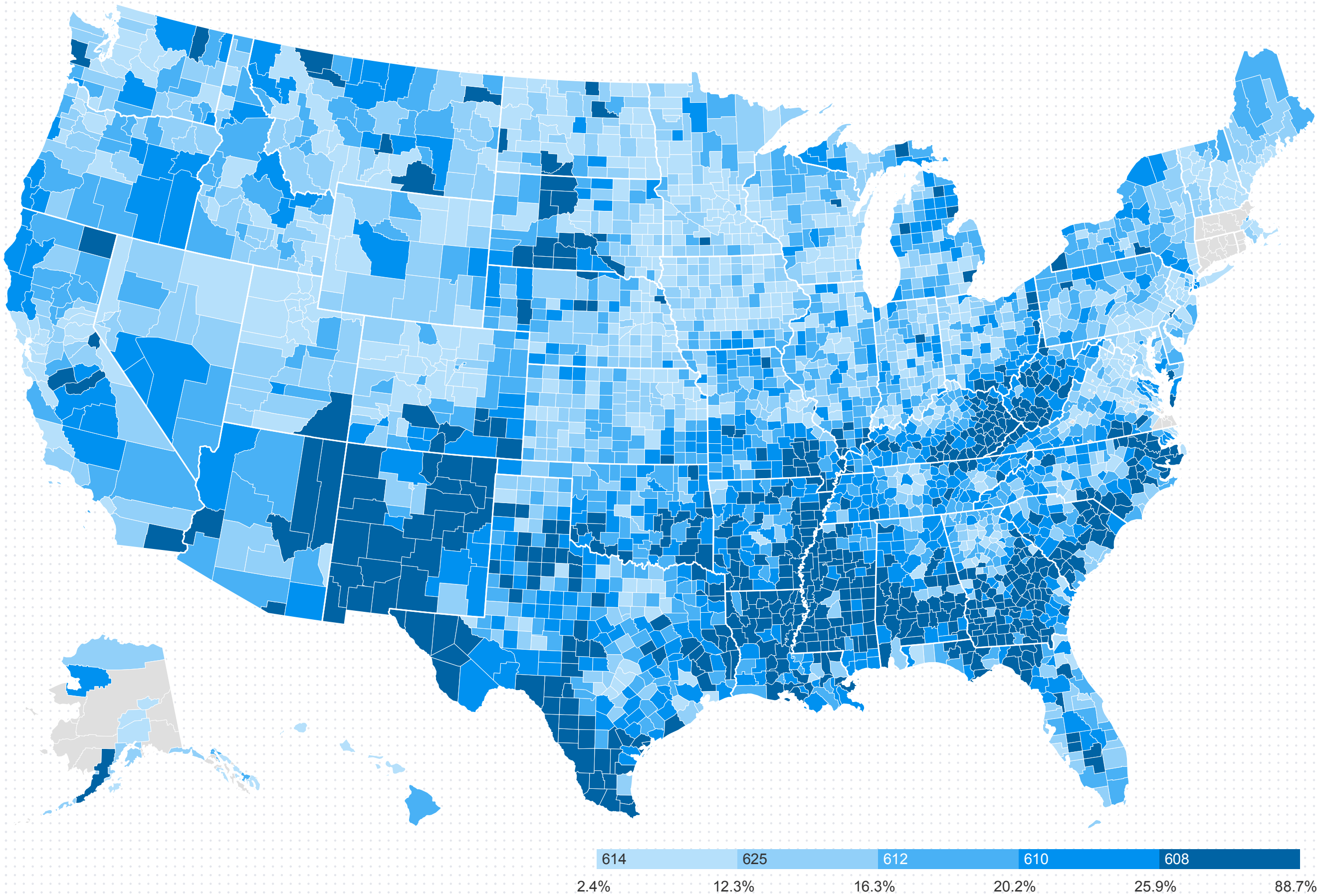
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **State** | $22.9 B | 32.4% |
| **Tuition** | $15.5 B | 21.8% |
| **Local** | $15.2 B | 21.4% |
| **Other** | $4.2 B | 18.5% |
| **Total** | $70.9 B | 100% |

***Source:*** *American Association of Community Colleges, Fast Facts 2023*

# Children and Families

Counties are key intergovernmental partners across the many initiatives administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to combat poverty, stabilize families, prevent child abuse and neglect, promote early childhood development and more.

**2022 CHILD POVERTY RATE**




***Source:*** *NACo County Explorer, 2022*

## Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

CCDF is the federal government's funding source for child care subsidies to help eligible low-income families access child care and improve the quality of child care for all children.

County governments are responsible for administering CCDF in eight states, according to the most recent available state plans: Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, county administered CCDF states represented $2.8 billion in total federal, state and local program expenditures (roughly 24 percent.)[4] County administered CCDF states represented 16 percent of total children served by the program on an average monthly basis that same year.[5]

| STATE | AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED IN FY 2020 | TOTAL FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL CCDF EXPENDITURES IN FY 2020 |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 32,400 | $178,270,999.09 |
| Alaska | 2,500 | $32,897,564.00 |
| Arizona | 34,600 | $274,989,383.73 |
| Arkansas | 11,400 | $88,313,352.00 |
| California | 200,800 | $1,232,294,739.00 |
| Colorado | 17,100 | $158,168,791.91 |
| Connecticut | 11,400 | $122,484,899.00 |
| Delaware | 5,800 | $34,884,323.63 |
| Florida | 109,100 | $734,699,722.66 |
| Georgia | 54,600 | $409,296,225.54 |
| Hawaii | 2,600 | $39,091,224.00 |
| Idaho | 6,900 | $46,232,290.00 |
| Illinois | 50,500 | $423,094,535.00 |
| Indiana | 30,700 | $261,160,312.99 |
| Iowa | 16,400 | $99,385,827.90 |
| Kansas | 11,700 | $70,459,758.00 |
| Kentucky | 20,800 | $130,701,649.00 |
| Louisiana | 19,700 | $131,959,399.00 |
| Maine | 4,800 | $39,203,010.60 |
| Maryland | 19,600 | $229,810,704.67 |
| Massachusetts | 28,700 | $300,519,645.16 |
| Michigan | 34,000 | $250,030,578.00 |
| Minnesota | 21,600 | $217,602,833.00 |
| Mississippi | 22,100 | $112,845,146.00 |
| Missouri | 28,700 | $170,225,670.00 |
| Montana | 1,600 | $27,649,016.00 |
| Nebraska | 7,500 | $67,166,009.00 |

| STATE | AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED IN FY 2020 | TOTAL FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL CCDF EXPENDITURES IN FY 2020 |
|---|---|---|
| Nevada | 9,100 | $101,640,604.20 |
| New Hampshire | 4,200 | $29,698,486.00 |
| New Jersey | 42,700 | $344,864,248.00 |
| New Mexico | 10,900 | $93,380,512.28 |
| New York | 78,200 | $1,095,068,389.01 |
| North Carolina | 40,500 | $472,213,720.00 |
| North Dakota | 2,400 | $19,283,567.00 |
| Ohio | 56,200 | $406,677,774.00 |
| Oklahoma | 24,900 | $189,744,320.00 |
| Oregon | 12,500 | $115,553,566.00 |
| Pennsylvania | 96,000 | $538,837,307.06 |
| Rhode Island | 3,200 | $33,071,749.00 |
| South Carolina | 11,700 | $115,793,702.00 |
| South Dakota | 3,400 | $21,744,475.13 |
| Tennessee | 38,100 | $274,345,586.52 |
| Texas | 147,100 | $998,222,569.00 |
| Utah | 12,400 | $107,261,113.00 |
| Vermont | 2,200 | $27,992,247.00 |
| Virginia | 19,400 | $230,065,946.00 |
| Washington | 29,600 | $295,270,141.81 |
| West Virginia | 9,700 | $61,077,417.63 |
| Wisconsin | 18,400 | $237,171,435.10 |
| Wyoming | 2,600 | $14,877,969.50 |

**CCDF ADMINISTRATION**

County State

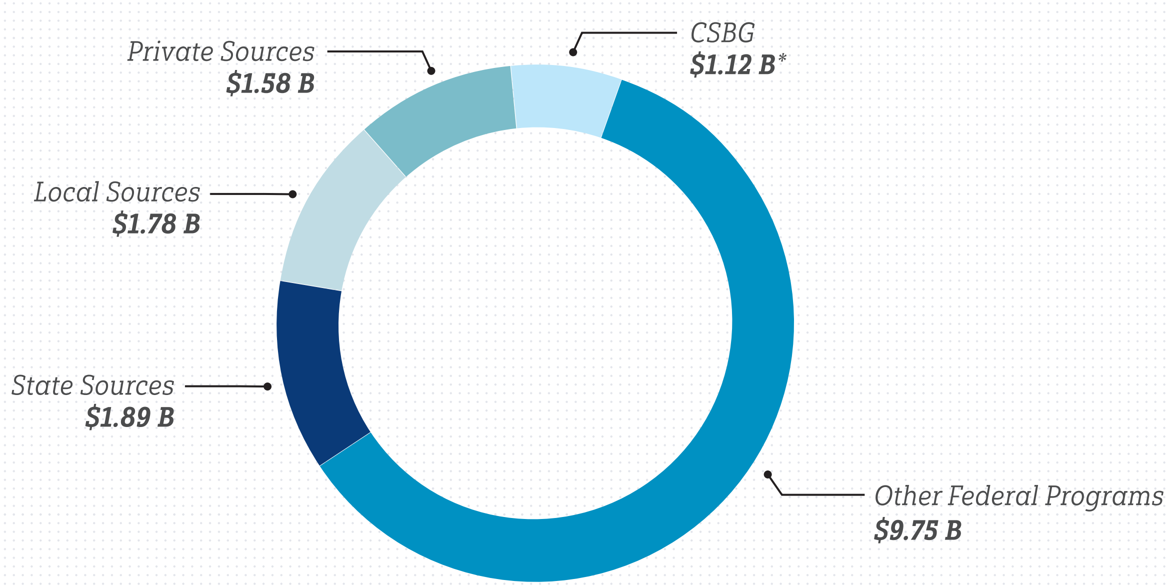
***Source:*** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services FY 2020 CCDF Expenditure and Program Data*

## Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

CSBG supports local agencies in designing and implementing anti-poverty programs tailored to an individual community's needs, with a focus on housing, health, employment, income and civic engagement outcomes. Most CSBG funding is distributed to states, which must pass at least 90 percent of the funds to a network of more than 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in 99 percent of America's counties. CAAs are local organizations (primarily private nonprofits, though 159 grantees are units of local government) with the mission of reducing poverty through locally designed and delivered programs and services. CAAs are governed by a tripartite board that represents the low-income community, local elected officials, and private and public community stakeholders. In FY 2020, the CSBG network served 9.5 million individuals living in poverty, including 3.2 million children. While CSBG is the core source of federal funding for all CAAs, many also operate a variety of grants that come from federal, state and local sources. In FY 2020, local sources, including county governments, contributed $1.78 billion to Community Action Agencies.[6]

> In FY 2020, the CSBG network served **9.5 million individuals** living in poverty, including 3.2 million children.

**FUNDING SOURCES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES IN FY 2020**




***Source:*** *National Association for State Community Services Programs FY 20 Community Services Block Grant National Performance Update*

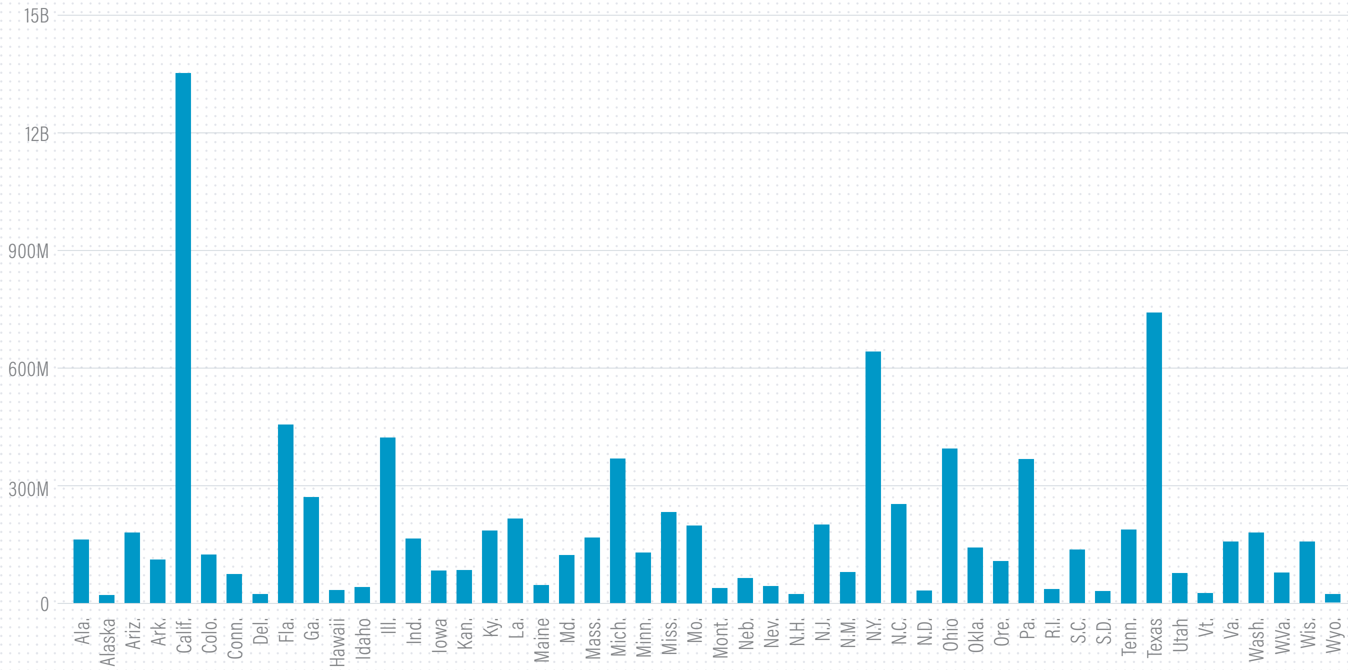
**Includes emergency funding authorized for COVID-19 response*

## Head Start and Early Head Start

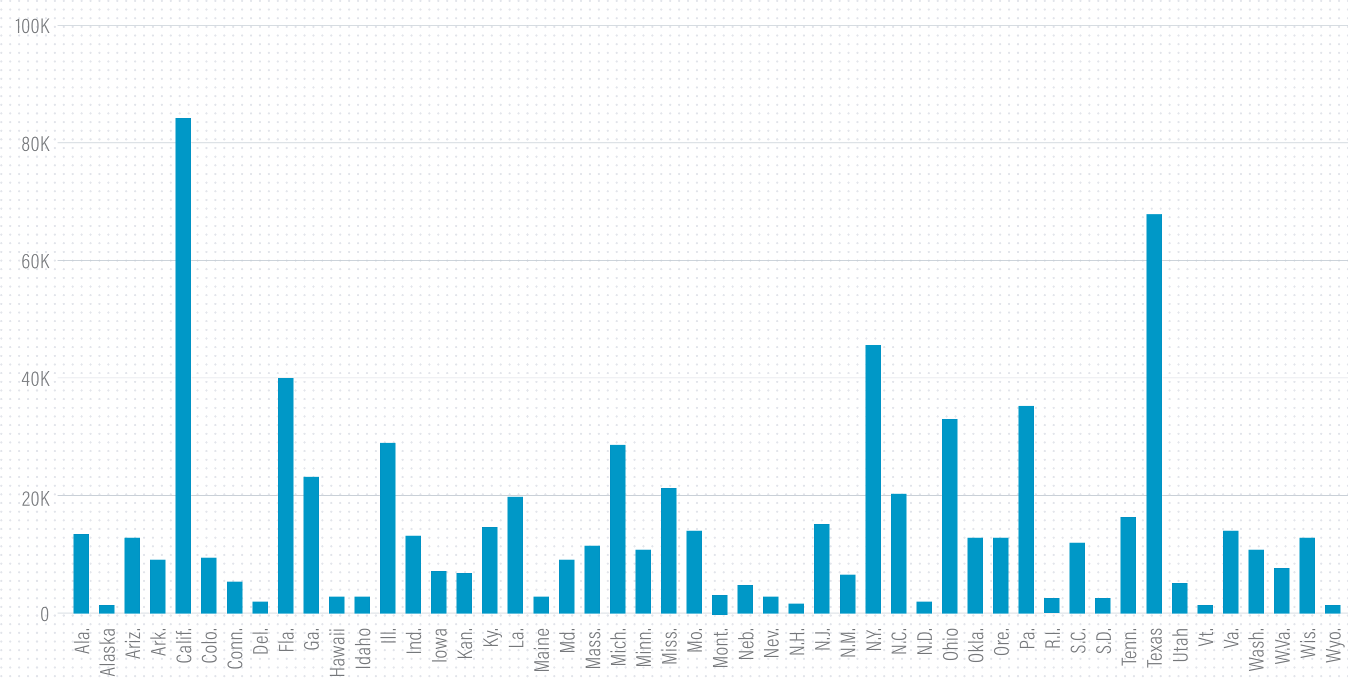
Head Start and Early Head Start targets children under 5 from low-income families with comprehensive programming to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs and bolster school readiness. Head Start preschool programs serve 3- and 4-year-old children, while Early Head Start programs focus on infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Head Start services are delivered nationwide through 1,600 agencies that tailor the federal program to the local needs of families in their service area. County governments often play an important role in the operation of Head Start and Early Head Start programs, whether by directly serving local grantees and/or by contributing supplemental funding to support the program.

## HEAD START FUNDING AND FUNDED ENROLLMENT BY STATE, FY 2022

*Federal Funding*




*Funded Enrollment*



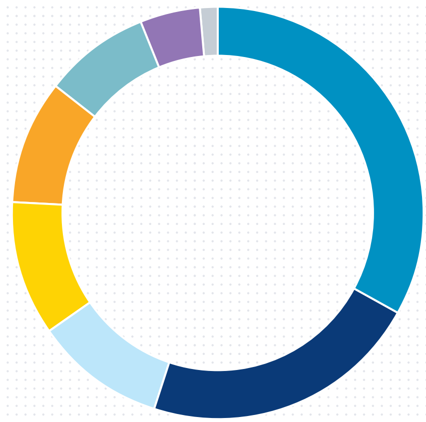

***Source:*** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Program Facts: Fiscal Year 2022*

## Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)

SSBG funds support 29 different types of services across eight High Level Service Areas that reduce dependency and promote self-sufficiency; protect children and adults from neglect, abuse and exploitation; and help individuals who are unable to take care of themselves to stay in their homes or to find the best institutional arrangements. Nine states pass SSBG funds directly to counties: Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin, though counties in other states can access SSBG funds as well. These nine states represented 32 percent of total recipients of SSBG services and $394 million (25 percent) of FY 2021 SSBG expenditures.7 States may also transfer up to 10 percent of their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grants to the SSBG for programs or services to children or their families whose income is less than 200 percent of the federal income poverty. In FY 2021, states transferred a total $1.1 billion from TANF for SSBG expenditures.[8]

> In 2021, SSBG served nearly
> **21 million individuals,**
> 46 percent of whom were children.

**NATIONAL SSBG EXPENDITURES BY HIGH-LEVEL SERVICE AREA (HSLA)**



- Child Welfare/Youth at Risk **$886.5 M**
- Additional Support Services **$583.5 M**
- Special services for disabled individuals **$279.1 M**
- Counseling and Support **$278.8 M**
- Child Care **$262.2 M**
- Vulnerable and Elderly Adult **$225.5 M**
- Health and Well-being **$121.4 M**
- Self-Sufficiency **$34.6 M**

***Source:*** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SSBG Annual Report 2021. Includes TANF expenditures.*

## Child Welfare

The child welfare system primarily functions to prevent and respond to the abuse or neglect of children by their parents and caregivers. This mission is accomplished through a federal, state and local partnership that encompasses a wide range of services, such as in-home family preservation, child protection, foster and kinship care placements, residential treatment, adoption, independent living, mental health care, substance use treatment, education, parenting skills, domestic violence, employment assistance, health care, child care, financial support and housing.

In nine states, county governments are responsible for administering the child welfare system: California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. These states generally offer significant authority and much-needed flexibility to county child welfare agencies, and counties may in turn be responsible for contributing to the non-federal share of programs such as Title IV-E Foster Care and Maintenance Payments. In Nevada and Wisconsin, counties share administration of the child welfare system with the state in a "hybrid" system. Together, the 11 states with a county role in the child welfare system represented 33.8 percent of the population of children served in formal foster care in 2022.[9]

| STATE | CHILDREN SERVED IN FOSTER CARE IN 2021 | PERCENT OF TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 8,538 | 1.5% |
| Alaska | 3,943 | 0.7% |
| Arizona | 20,565 | 3.6% |
| Arkansas | 6,788 | 1.2% |
| California | 67,699 | 11.9% |
| Colorado | 7,155 | 1.3% |
| Connecticut | 4,707 | 0.8% |
| Delaware | 804 | 0.1% |
| Florida | 34,120 | 6.0% |
| Georgia | 15,791 | 2.8% |
| Hawaii | 2,292 | 0.4% |
| Idaho | 2,597 | 0.5% |
| Illinois | 26,658 | 4.7% |
| Indiana | 19,201 | 3.4% |
| Iowa | 6,797 | 1.2% |
| Kansas | 10,061 | 1.8% |
| Kentucky | 13,227 | 2.3% |
| Louisiana | 6,317 | 1.1% |
| Maine | 3,291 | 0.6% |
| Maryland | 5,334 | 0.9% |
| Massachusetts | 12,906 | 2.3% |
| Michigan | 13,182 | 2.3% |
| Minnesota | 10,923 | 1.9% |
| Mississippi | 5,805 | 1.0% |
| Missouri | 18,824 | 3.3% |
| Montana | 4,434 | 0.8% |

| STATE | CHILDREN SERVED IN FOSTER CARE IN 2021 | PERCENT OF TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED |
|---|---|---|
| Nebraska | 5,671 | 1.0% |
| Nevada | 6,783 | 1.2% |
| New Hampshire | 1,779 | 0.3% |
| New Jersey | 4,625 | 0.8% |
| New Mexico | 2,748 | 0.5% |
| New York | 20,605 | 3.6% |
| North Carolina | 15,377 | 2.7% |
| North Dakota | 2,346 | 0.4% |
| Ohio | 24,391 | 4.3% |
| Oklahoma | 10,983 | 1.9% |
| Oregon | 7,410 | 1.3% |
| Pennsylvania | 20,082 | 3.5% |
| Rhode Island | 2,608 | 0.5% |
| South Carolina | 6,735 | 1.2% |
| South Dakota | 2,553 | 0.4% |
| Tennessee | 14,403 | 2.5% |
| Texas | 37,425 | 6.6% |
| Utah | 3,568 | 0.6% |
| Vermont | 1,663 | 0.3% |
| Virginia | 7,279 | 1.3% |
| Washington | 12,349 | 2.2% |
| West Virginia | 11,495 | 2.0% |
| Wisconsin | 10,290 | 1.8% |
| Wyoming | 1,525 | 0.3% |

**CHILD WELFARE ADMINISTRATION**

County State Hybrid

***Source:*** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Trends in Foster Care & Adoption Statistics: FY 2013-2022.*

## Child Support Enforcement (CSE)

The federal CSE program (also referred to as Title IV-D) is a federal, state, and local partnership to promote parental responsibility so children receive support from both parents, even when they live in separate households. CSE enforcement agencies locate noncustodial parents, establish legal parentage, establish and enforce support orders, increase health care coverage for children, and remove barriers to regular payments by referring parents to employment services, supporting healthy co-parenting relationships, supporting responsible fatherhood, and helping to prevent and reduce family violence. While any parent or person with custody of a child who needs help to establish a child support or medical support order or to collect support payments can apply for Title IV-D services, individuals receiving public assistance from the state are required to participate in the public child support program.

Child support program structures vary widely from state to state, including whether a judicial, administrative or hybrid process is used. Most states have centralized programs with local service offices. California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin have county-administered programs. In FY 2022, these states represented $8.5 billion, or 30 percent, of total CSE collections.[10] However, many states also utilize cooperative agreements with county courts and county law enforcement agencies (among other entities) to carry out the program.

Title IV-D programs are primarily funded by the federal government, which reimburses states for 66 percent of allowable child support outlays at a minimum. The financing structures for the remaining state match are complex and may draw on revenue from the state CSE agency, county and other local administrative agencies, and the family and domestic court system, even in states that are not county administered.

## Federal Child Support Enforcement Caseloads and Collections, FY 2022

| STATE | CASELOAD | COLLECTIONS |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 185,903 | $307,958,926 |
| Alaska | 35,850 | $94,599,568 |
| Arizona | 131,325 | $287,417,931 |
| Arkansas | 154,126 | $248,683,879 |
| California | 1,046,447 | $2,440,780,108 |
| Colorado | 127,788 | $295,397,108 |
| Connecticut | 123,083 | $214,698,128 |
| Delaware | 73,232 | $69,390,511 |
| Florida | 589,954 | $1,476,609,944 |
| Georgia | 328,321 | $663,297,265 |
| Hawaii | 51,678 | $85,621,380 |
| Idaho | 89,236 | $160,971,280 |
| Illinois | 354,650 | $712,364,236 |
| Indiana | 220,432 | $497,961,991 |
| Iowa | 141,555 | $298,800,987 |
| Kansas | 131,490 | $192,565,938 |
| Kentucky | 242,867 | $328,169,668 |
| Louisiana | 239,350 | $404,553,485 |
| Maine | 36,165 | $90,761,537 |
| Maryland | 159,920 | $498,808,698 |
| Massachusetts | 196,398 | $561,372,753 |
| Michigan | 760,124 | $1,169,551,215 |
| Minnesota | 190,810 | $500,030,183 |
| Mississippi | 241,979 | $335,993,077 |
| Missouri | 289,097 | $515,612,685 |
| Montana | 28,947 | $61,441,559 |
| Nebraska | 97,908 | $202,738,838 |
| Nevada | 77,279 | $184,325,961 |
| New Hampshire | 30,021 | $73,454,712 |
| New Jersey | 227,423 | $914,518,558 |
| New Mexico | 51,478 | $110,375,559 |
| New York | 624,300 | $1,588,718,531 |
| North Carolina | 364,780 | $622,163,231 |
| North Dakota | 32,794 | $101,653,408 |
| Ohio | 717,364 | $1,482,462,403 |
| Oklahoma | 161,641 | $301,242,383 |
| Oregon | 141,249 | $318,841,322 |
| Pennsylvania | 300,352 | $1,082,584,245 |
| Rhode Island | 48,399 | $70,133,298 |
| South Carolina | 154,869 | $272,210,504 |
| South Dakota | 40,564 | $95,871,147 |
| Tennessee | 310,997 | $568,188,369 |
| Texas | 1,469,620 | $4,294,136,730 |
| Utah | 84,053 | $199,536,275 |
| Vermont | 12,113 | $36,932,881 |
| Virginia | 261,697 | $567,311,878 |
| Washington | 252,364 | $614,962,356 |
| West Virginia | 84,097 | $149,247,379 |
| Wisconsin | 337,233 | $632,208,560 |
| Wyoming | 22,257 | $61,928,131 |

**ADMINISTRATION**

County State

***Source:*** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement, FY 2022 Preliminary Data Tables*

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF provides states with flexible funding for programs aimed at promoting stability, family preservation, and access to employment among low-income households with children. Nine states representing more than half of the national caseload delegate TANF administration, including Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements, to counties: California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio and Virginia. In FY 2022, these states represented $15.3 billion, or 52.5 percent, of total federal, state and local TANF expenditures (including funds transferred to CCDF and SSBG).[11]

Along with cash assistance (which requires recipients to participate in work activities and meet a minimum weekly work threshold), TANF grants may be used for a wide range of benefits and services for families with children. Counties in county-administered states therefore often have broad flexibility in how they utilize their TANF allocations.

*In FY 2022, these states represented **$15.3 billion, or 52.4 percent,** of total federal, state and local TANF expenditures (including funds transferred to CCDF and SSBG).*



**TOTAL TANF SPENDING BY CATEGORY, FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**23.0 percent** Basic Assistance

**15.5 percent** Child care

**10.4 percent** Program Management

**10.4 percent** Pre-kindergarten/Head Start

**8.9 percent** Child Welfare

**8.4 percent** Refundable Tax Credits

**8.1 percent** Work, Education, and Training Activities

**5.4 percent** Other

**3.6 percent** Services for Children & Youth

**3.6 percent** Transfers to the Social Services Block Grant

**2.7 percent** Work Supports & Supportive Services

***Source:*** *Administration on Children and Families, TANF and MOE Spending and Transfers by Activity, FY 2022*

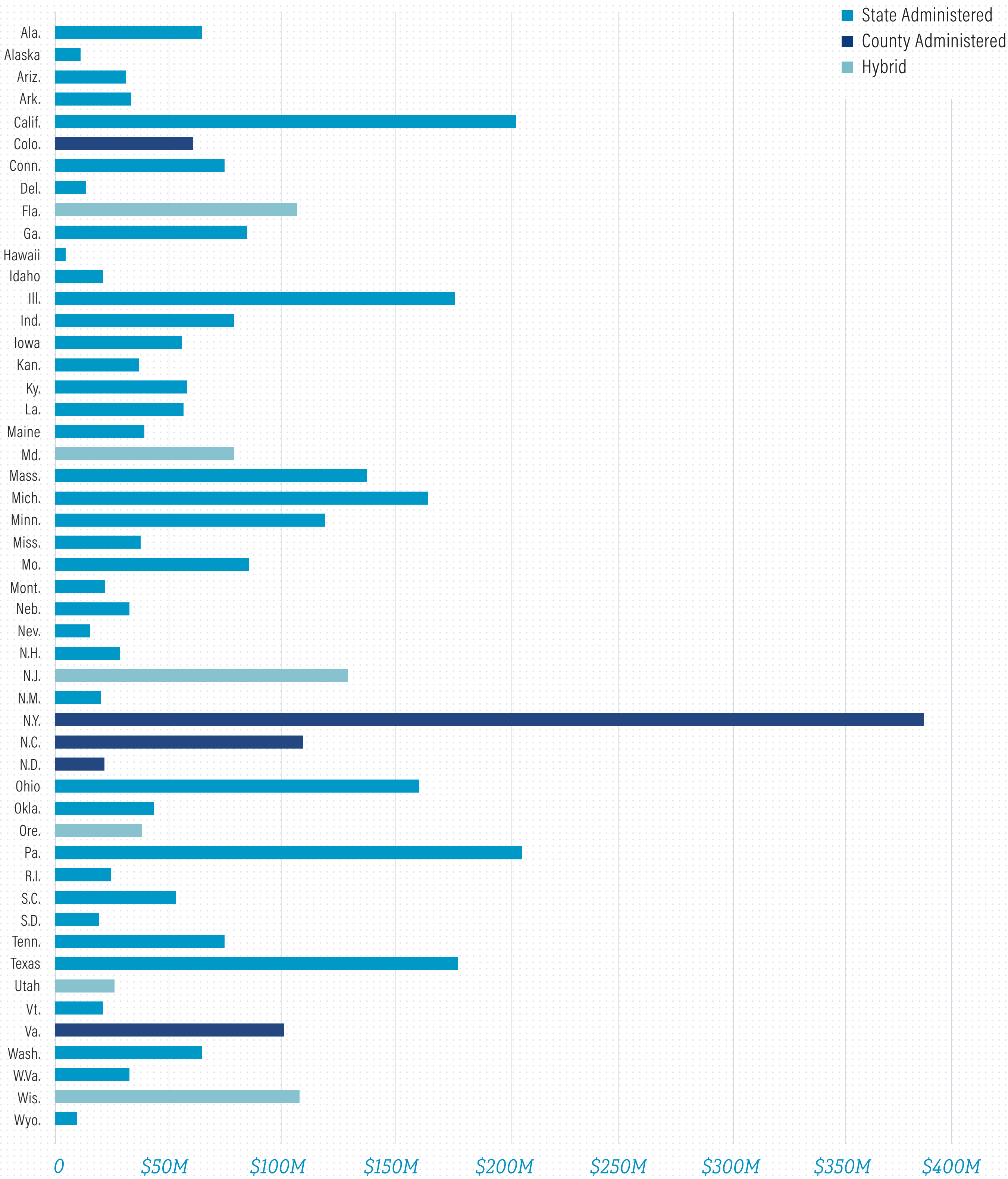
## Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP provides federally funded assistance to reduce the costs associated with home energy bills from heating and cooling, energy crises, weatherization and minor energy-related home repairs. Typically, a utility company will directly bill the local program administrator for a household's LIHEAP benefit, leaving the recipient to pay off the remaining amount of their bill.

LIHEAP is a partnership between the federal government, states, and local public or non-profit agencies which are tasked with administering the program. In Colorado, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Virginia, county governments serve as the primary LIHEAP agency. Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin deploy a hybrid model in which either county governments or non-profits serve as the LIHEAP agency. In states that only contract with non-profit organizations to administer LIHEAP, the agencies are often represented by Community Action Agencies (CAAs), meaning they partner closely with local governments, including counties.

In FY 2022, county-administered and hybrid states represented 37.7 percent of total LIHEAP allocations.[12]

## FY 2022 FEDERAL LIHEAP ALLOCATION BY STATE




**Source:** *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FY 2022 Final Release of Regular LIHEAP Block Grant Funds to States and Territories*

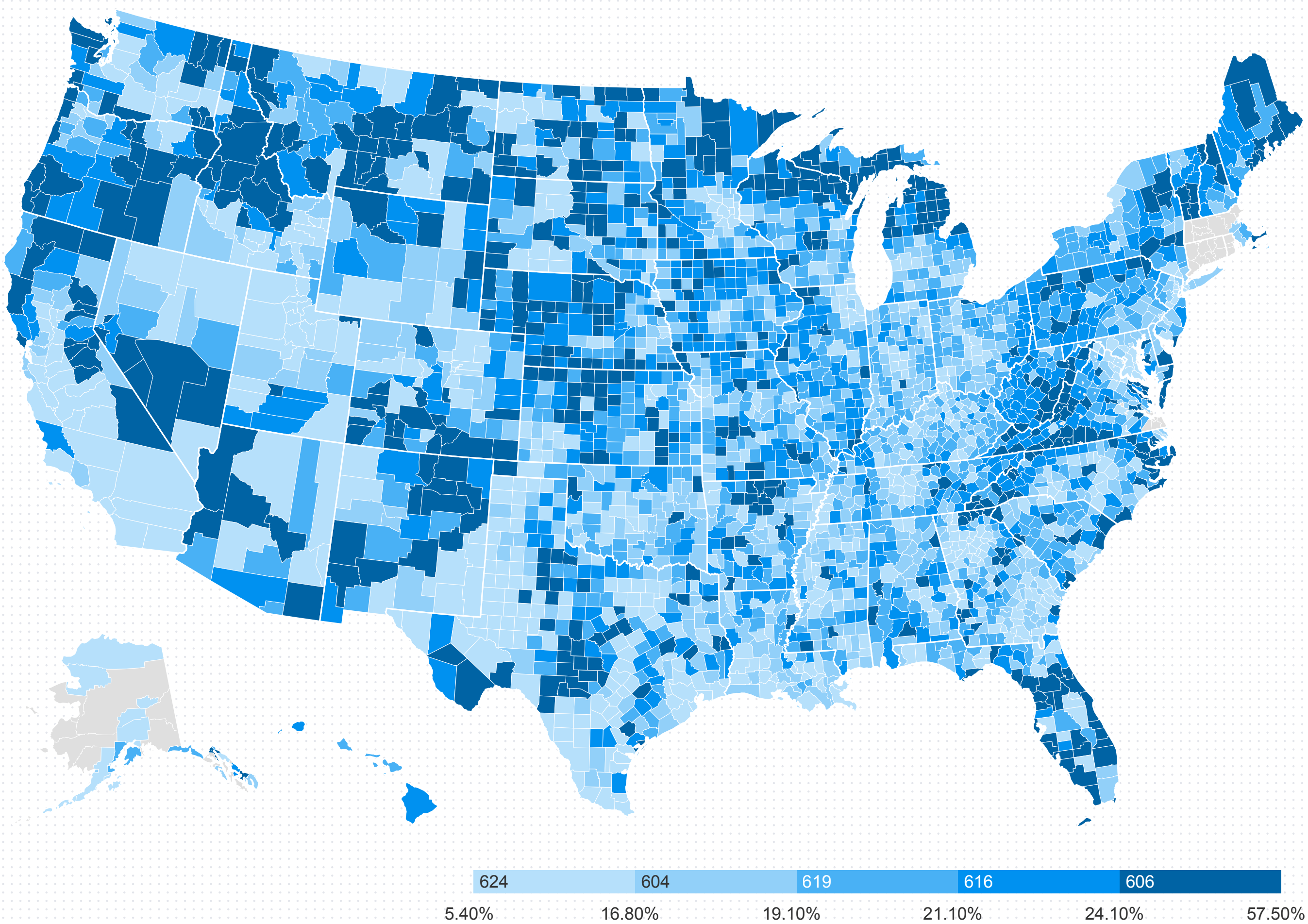
# Aging and Disability Services

County governments play an essential role in ensuring the health and safety of older Americans and individuals with disabilities, including through county-owned or operated long-term care facilities and community-based services. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AOA) under the Administration for Community Living (ACL) oversees services, supports and research aimed at ensuring that older adults and people of all ages with disabilities can live where they choose, with the people they choose, and with the ability to participate fully in their communities.

## Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs

The Older Americans Act (OAA) supports activities that help older adults live independently and remain part of the community. The majority of OAA programs are Title III "core services" that vary depending on local needs, but often include transportation, nutrition, support for caregivers, recreation, in-home assistance, disease prevention and more. The OAA also authorizes funding for training, research and demonstration projects in the field of aging as well as grants for services for Native Americans and elder rights activities.

**2022 PERCENT 65 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER**




***Source:*** *NACo County Explorer, 2022*

States receive Title III Grants according to a formula based on their share of the nation's population of individuals 60 and older. States then pass these funds to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), public or private non-profit agencies which coordinate programs and services for senior citizens at the local level. In the few states without an AAA infrastructure—those with small populations or sparsely populated land areas—the state serves the AAA function.

Counties are key recipients of these dollars and frequent administrators of these programs. Roughly 31 percent of the 614 AAAs across the nation operate within county or city governments, while another 23 percent operate within regional planning councils or councils of governments that often include counties. Meanwhile, 55 percent of AAAs rely on local funding streams through counties or other local governments to provide additional programs and services.[13]

## Adult Protective Services (APS)

APS programs prevent neglect, self-neglect, and fiduciary and physical abuse of older and disabled adults. While services can vary from state to state and county to county, most states provide APS for adults 18 and older with a significant physical and/or mental impairment. In some states, APS serves older individuals without disabilities, and about half of all states allow APS reporting of vulnerable older adult abuse in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. APS programs are state supervised and county administered in Alabama, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia. In California, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, APS programs are county supervised and county administered. In Indiana, the state contracts 18 County Prosecutors offices to serve as regional APS hubs.

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING STRUCTURE**

**42 percent** Independent non-Profit

**31 percent** Part of county/city government

**23 percent** Part of a council of governments or regional planning and development agency

**3 percent** Other

**1 percent** Tribe or Tribal Organization

***Source:*** *USAging, 2023 Chartbook, More Older Adults, More Complex Needs: Trends and New Directions from the National Survey of Area Agencies on Aging. Numbers may not add too 100 due to rounding.*

The federal government provides minimal dedicated funding for APS programs, meaning counties often rely on state funds and local dollars to fulfill these responsibilities.

In 2020, state and local APS programs employed a workforce of 8,592 individuals in hotline or investigator roles and 1,735 supervisors.[14] Collectively, they received 1.33 million referrals of alleged maltreatment, 58.3 percent of which were accepted for investigation.

# Food and Nutrition Assistance

County governments play an integral role in our nation's food system, including by overseeing and supporting programs authorized under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to combat food and nutrition insecurity among low-income residents.

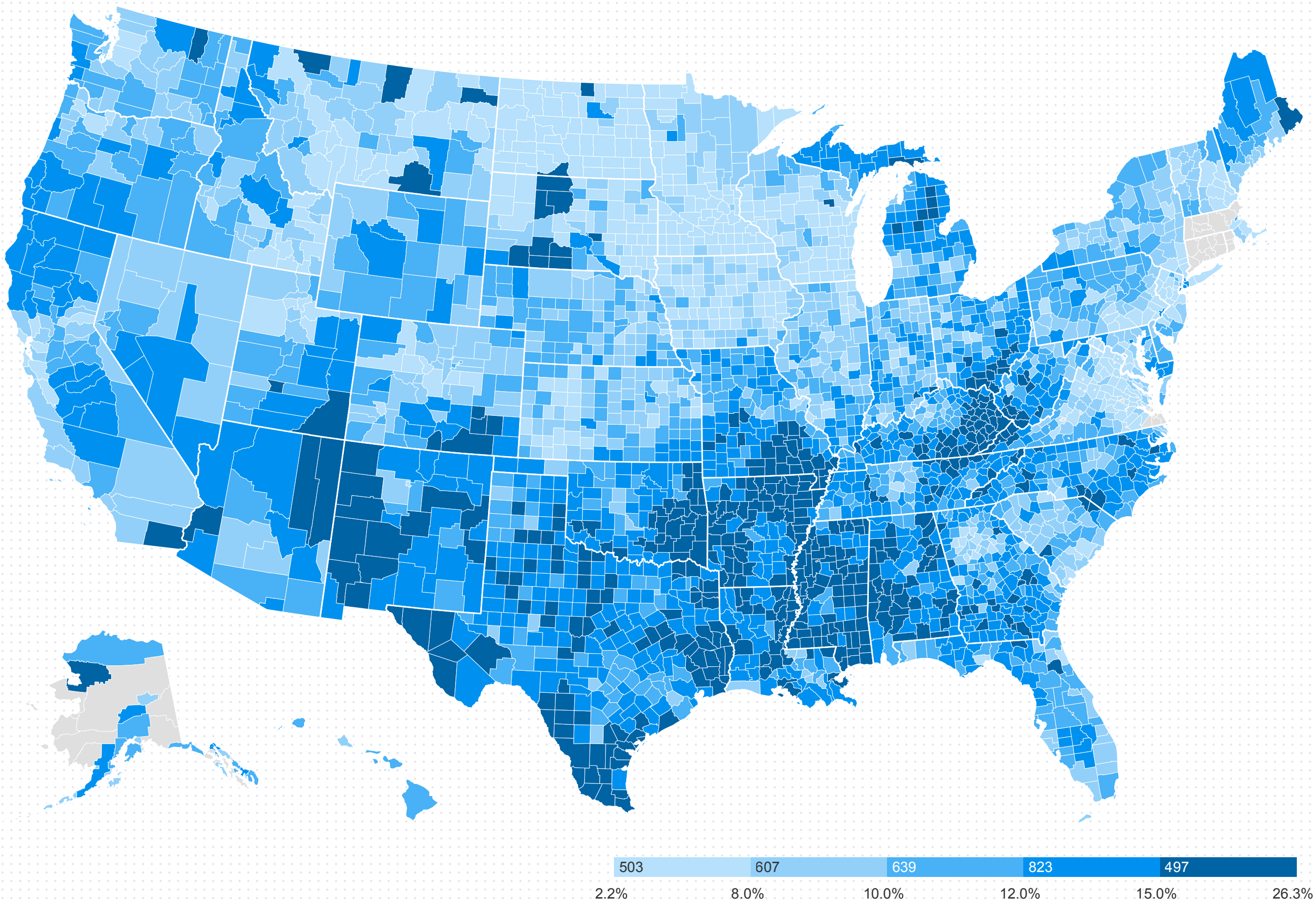
## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the largest federal nutrition program, providing 42.6 million low-income individuals with monthly grocery benefits as well as employment and training opportunities.

Counties are responsible for administering the program in ten states representing 34.3 percent of total participants (14.6 million people): California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin.[16] Counties operating SNAP often contribute significant levels of local funds to meet the administrative and supplemental costs of running the program. These 10 county-administered states represented $23.5 billion in total monthly SNAP benefits issued in FY 2020, 31.8 percent of the national total.[17]

In these states, counties often contribute substantial local funds for administrative and supplemental costs toward the program. In Minnesota, North Carolina and New Jersey counties must meet the entire 50 percent non-federal match requirement for SNAP administrative funds, while in California, Colorado, New York, Virginia and Wisconsin the counties share this financial obligation with the state. Only in Ohio and North Dakota does the state entirely fund this requirement. In FY 2020, county-administered states spent a combined $2.2 billion on the non-federal administrative share of the SNAP program.[18]

## 2021 FOOD INSECURITY RATE




**Source:** *NACo County Explorer, 2021*

### National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Summer Breakfast Program (SBP)

Through the NSLP and SBP, USDA contributes funds to provide reduced-cost or free meals to millions of low-income children at school.

In 2023, the NSLP served free and reduced-price lunches to over 20 million students across nearly 95,000 schools and institutions daily, while the SBP served free and reduced price breakfasts to just 11.6 million students across more than 90,000 schools and institutions daily.[19]

These programs are administered and funded through a partnership between the federal government, states, and local school food authorities, though student payments also contribute revenue to the program. County funds supporting K-12 education may therefore represent a portion of the local expenditures on the program. Beyond directly financing schools and their operations, county governments share a common tax base with local school districts and provide complementary services to the same populations of students.

## Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The SFSP provides free, nutritious meals to eligible low-income children during the summer months when school is not in session. State agencies administer the program in partnerships with sponsors (such as schools, local government agencies, and community-based organizations with food service programs) who operate sites across the community where children engage in enrichment activities and receive meals in a safe and supervised environment. An estimated 5,492 SFSP sponsors provide summer meals at 57,031 sites across the country.[19] Local, municipal and county government agencies represent 5 percent of all SFSP sponsors, though counties may also indirectly support the SFSP by providing funds to public schools, which are by far the largest share of sponsors.[20]

## Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

The WIC program provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and support and healthcare and social service referrals to nearly 7 million low-income pregnant and post-partum women and children up to the age of 5 who are at nutritional risk, including more than half of all infants born in the United States. State agencies administer WIC through 1,900 local agencies in 10,000 clinic sites. Nearly 50 percent of local WIC agencies function as part of local government, including counties, while clinic sites also include county health departments and other county agencies.[21]

### SFSP SPONSORS BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Other** | 0.7% |
| **Residential Camp** | 2.0% |
| **Local or Municipal Government Agency** | 5.0% |
| **Non-profit organization or SFA** | 39.0% |
| **Public school food authority (SFA)** | 53.4% |

***Source:*** *USDA Food and Nutrition Service, USDA Summer Meals Study Volume 2. Sponsor and Site Operational Characteristics, 2018. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding*

### LOCAL WIC AGENCY ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Part of State Agency** | 17.0% |
| **Nonprofit Organization** | 26.1% |
| **Local Government Entity** | 49.5% |
| **Other** | 7.4% |

***Source:*** *USDA Food and Nutrition Service, National Survey of WIC Participants III, 2021*

# Veterans Services

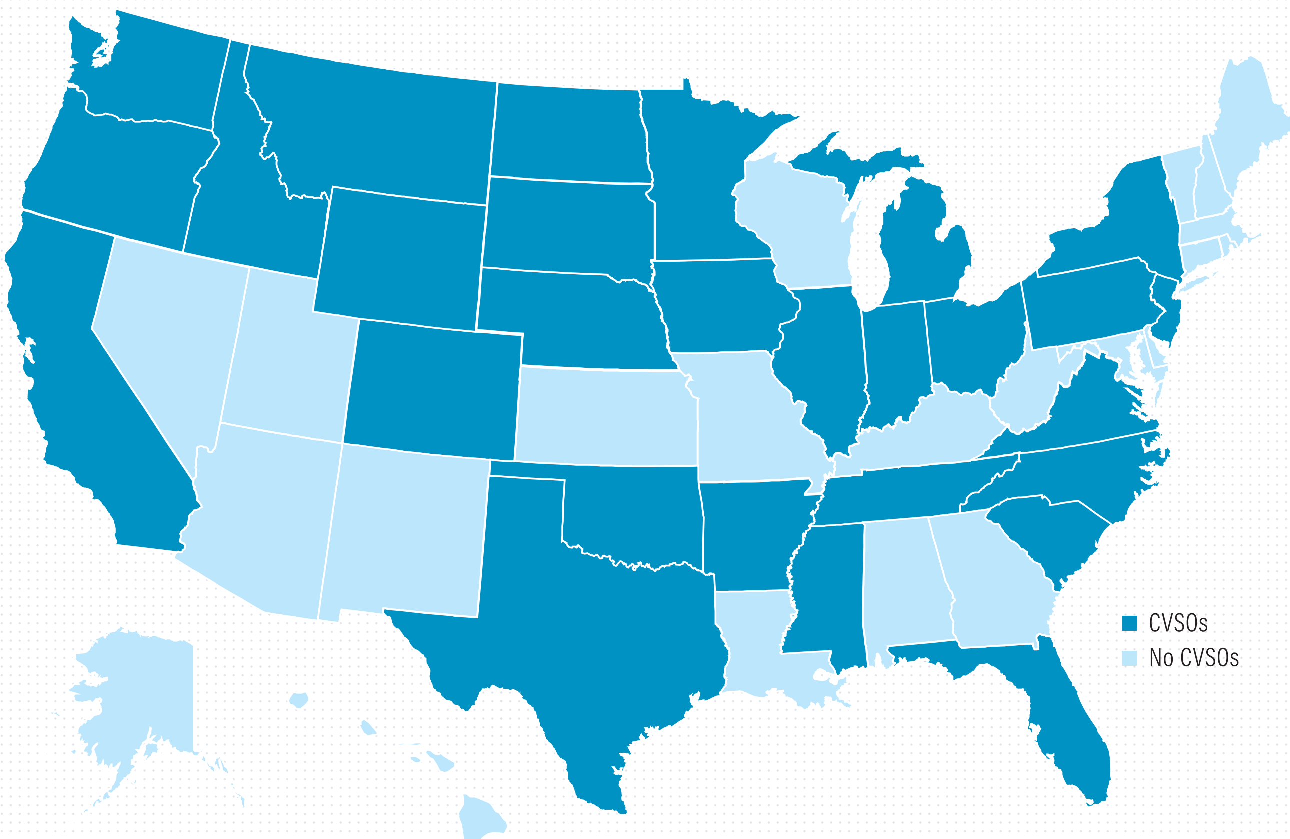
America's counties are home to 17.5 million veterans, and we are deeply invested in veterans' health and well-being, often assisting with pension and disability benefits, housing, employment and education, and mental health services that treat trauma and prevent suicide in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

## County Veterans Services Officers

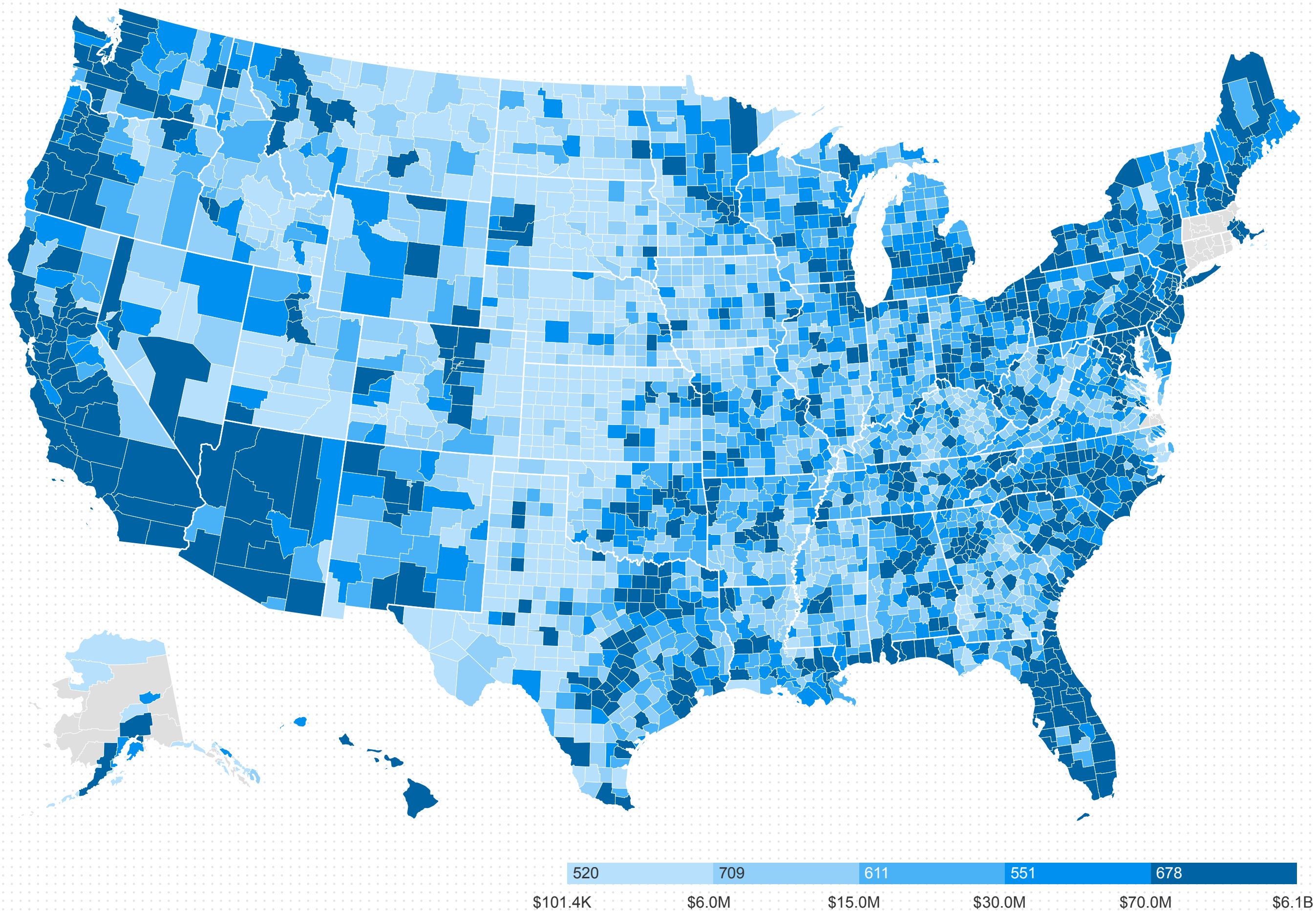
CVSOs are local county employees who are nationally accredited by the VA to prepare, present, and prosecute U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims. Often, CVSOs are veteran's first point of contact in the community for accessing services. CVSOs assist veterans in accessing a range of benefits, including service-connected benefits, enrollment in VA health care, VA home loans, education benefits and available job placement assistance. Veterans are not always aware of the benefits available to them, and CVSOs are often the first to inform them about their eligibility.

CVSOs operate in 29 states and perform much of the VA's legwork for filing claims in their counties. This relatively small workforce is responsible for successfully processing more than $50 billion in direct compensation, pension, health care and other benefits for veterans each year.

### CVSO STATUS BY STATE



**2022 TOTAL FEDERAL VETERAN FUNDING**




***Source:*** *NACo County Explorer, 2022*

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# Endnotes

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, Individual State Descriptions: 2017 Census of Governments

[2] NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - 2017 Census of Individual Governments: Finance

[3] American Association of Community Colleges, Fast Facts 2023

[4] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CCDF Expenditures for FY 2020, Table 4A. These figures do not include emergency funding authorized for COVID-19 relief.

[5] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 1 - Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served

[6] National Association for State Community Services Programs FY 20 Community Services Block Grant National Performance Update, pp. 6

[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SSBG Annual Report 2021, Tables C-5 and C-7. Figures do not include funds or services from TANF transfers.

[8] Ibid. p. 8

[9] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Trends in Foster Care & Adoption Statistics: FY 2013-2022

[10] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement, FY 2022 Preliminary Data Tables, Tables P-4 and P-52

[11] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, TANF Financial Data – FY 2022, Table E.1

[12] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FY 2022 Final Release of Regular LIHEAP Block Grant Funds to States and Territories

[13] USAging, 2023 Chartbook, More Older Adults, More Complex Needs: Trends and New Directions from the National Survey of Area Agencies on Aging, pp. 22 and 24

[14] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020 National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System Report, pp. 5

[15] Ibid., pp. 2

[16] U.S. Department of Agriculture, SNAP Data Tables, February 2024 State Level Participation and Benefits

[17] U.S. Department of Agriculture, FY 20 State Activity Report (Table 14)

[18] Ibid

[19] USDA Food and Nutrition Service, USDA Summer Meals Study Volume 2. Sponsor and Site Operational Characteristics, 2018, Tables A2 and A5

[20] Ibid., Table A-2

[21] USDA Food and Nutrition Service, National Survey of WIC Participants III, 2021

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