



2022 Lake County Community Health Needs Assessment 2023 Addendum: Eastlake



Lake County
General Health District

Public Health
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2022 Lake County Community Health Needs Assessment Addendum 1:

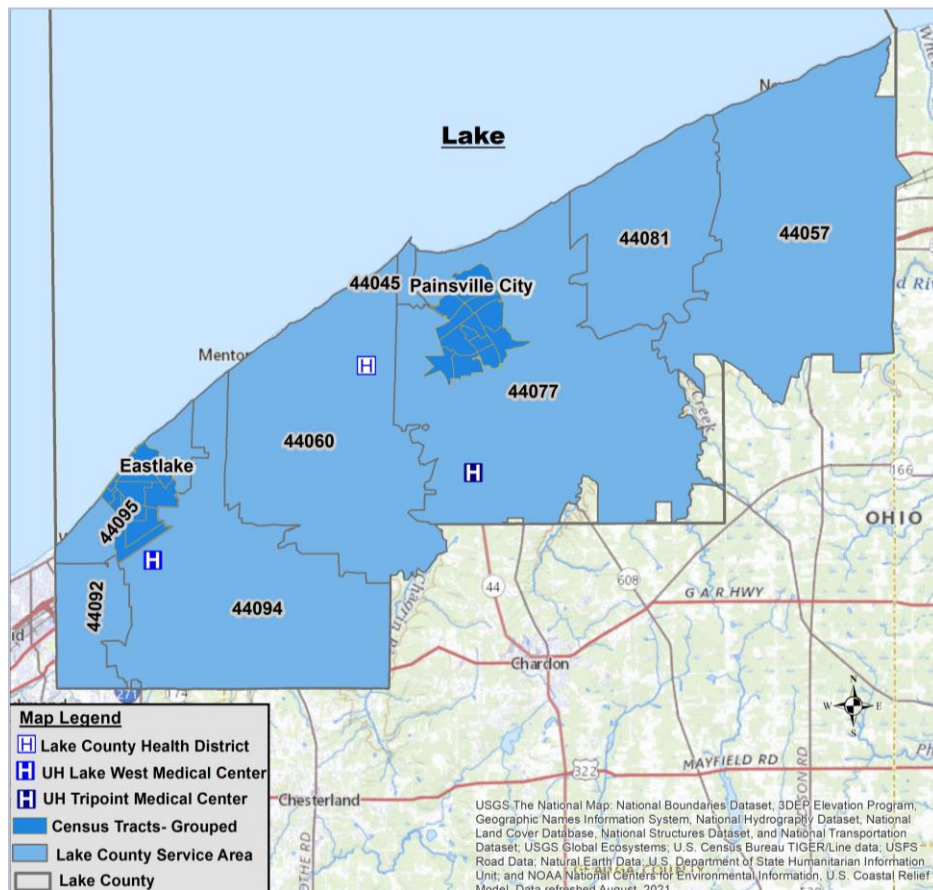
Health Issues in Eastlake

This Addendum to the 2022 Lake County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) focuses on a closer examination of health issues impacting Eastlake, which was identified in the 2022 CHNA as an area of need.

Methods and Results

CHNA partners were interested in gaining some additional context related to health issues impacting Eastlake, which was identified as a part of the county with higher need related to food insecurity and mental health, according to Conduent's SocioNeeds Index®¹. In particular, three census tracts, 39085202100, 39085206600, and 39085202000 were identified during the initial assessment, as shown in Figure 1. (Note, a subsequent examination and report will focus on the area around Painesville City.)

FIGURE 1. LAKE COUNTY CENSUS TRACT GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AREAS



¹ <https://www.healthynco.org/indexsuite>

As a result, partners elected to conduct structured interviews or focus groups with key stakeholders in the Eastlake area to collect additional qualitative data, including representatives from:

- Eastlake City Hall
- Willoughby-Eastlake Schools (focus group)
- McKinley Community Outreach Center
- Community of the Holy Spirit
- Vineyard Food Resource Center

In total, nine (9) representatives of these agencies provided input by way of four interviews and one focus group, conducted between April 5 and May 18, 2023. Interview/focus group transcripts were reviewed for content, and common themes were identified.

Food Insecurity

Participants agreed that food insecurity is a significant concern in and around the Eastlake Community, and provided the following observations:

- Many residents utilize food banks in and around Eastlake, and it seems to be more prevalent now than ever.
- Willoughby-Eastlake Schools partnered with End 68 Hours of Hunger, and reported they are currently one of the highest end users for this program in Lake County. Due to the high incidence of food insecurity, the district started its own food bank. This was an issue prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but have seen more students requesting food recently. Often, parents have to choose between groceries and gasoline.
- Churches and other organizations utilize benevolence funds to purchase grocery gift cards for congregants needing assistance and refer congregants and other community members to local food banks.
- McKinley outreach Center has a food bank and in the month of March, 2023, served 184 households in need. Of these, 68 (37%) were households in Eastlake.
- For Vineyard Food Resource Center, located in Wickliffe, Eastlake's ZIP code has been the second highest served for the past 11-15 years, and staff described food insecurity as a "chronic issue" there.
- Lots of people in the area are struggling and there has been an uptick in need within the last couple of years noted in resource centers. There has been growth in the number of food pantries, and the need continues.

Impacted populations

Participants were asked to indicate if there were any particular groups or populations that seemed to experience higher levels of food insecurity. The following groups were identified:

- Seniors on low fixed incomes
- Younger families

- Individuals experiencing employment gaps or those who are underemployed
- Those who cannot work
- Individuals with disabilities
- Low-income households
- People working in the service industry
- Minority populations, specifically African-Americans, with a noted increase recently
- Renters
- People with little or no transportation

When asked why this issue seemed more prevalent in Eastlake than other areas, participants indicated that they felt although food insecurity was an issue prior to the pandemic, it seems to be more of an issue now. Some participants described the issue as generational, and indicated that Eastlake has a lot of low-income households and an educational gap that exacerbate this issue.

Resources and Barriers

Eastlake has numerous resources to assist residents with food insecurity. These include:

- Senior Center
- Council on Aging
- Meals on Wheels
- McKinley Community Outreach Center
- Food banks
- Free and reduced school lunch programs
- 68 Hours of Hunger
- Jobs and Family Services
- Job opportunities through the school system
- Church benevolence funds
- LakeTran for transportation

Participants identified several barriers to accessing existing resources. These included the following:

- Many, including seniors don't have computers or can't/don't want to use the internet
- People don't know the resources exist, including 211
- People are embarrassed to request help due to stigma
- Transportation, particularly for those not on a bus line, those without reliable vehicles, and those who cannot afford gas
- Home dynamics
- Age-related barriers for the elderly population

Participants identified several additional resources that they felt would help in addressing food insecurity in the Eastlake area, which included:

- Availability of more fresh foods, including meat and dairy products
- Better quality foods
- Transportation for different areas to create easier access
- Backpack programs for students
- Additional partnerships to help meet needs
- Healthy cooking classes for the younger generation
- Education about finances
- Rent and utility support

Mental Health

Participants also noted that mental health concerns are prevalent in and around the Eastlake Community, and provided the following observations:

- Many of the issues are substance use/misuse related, and often drug abuse leads to financial issues.
- Post-COVID-19, people are not necessarily the same, and that has compounded mental health issues, and the political environment makes the issues worse
- Issues in the schools include vaping, nicotine use, and THC, and participants noted the age is decreasing and these issues are being seen in the middle school as well as the high school. This is in part due to substance use among parents being observed by younger children
- In schools, there are issues resulting from neglect, trauma, and other issues in the homes of students
- Suicides are increasing
- Community of the Holy Spirit's recovery ministry sees 25-30 people weekly, most of whom are also visiting their case workers and counselors.

Impacted populations

Participants were asked to indicate if there were any particular groups or populations that seemed to experience higher levels of mental health concerns or substance use and misuse. The following groups were identified:

- Many of issues observed seem to relate to addiction
- These issues seem to be impacting both those with lower and higher socioeconomic status
- African Americans tend to seek less assistance than other members of the community due to cultural stigma
- Some clients visiting food banks struggle with alcohol addiction

When asked why they felt this issue seemed more prevalent in Eastlake than other areas, participants indicated that the problems have probably existed for some time, but are coming to light more recently. Participants also noted that people don't have the resources to find better jobs outside of Eastlake, which further compounds the problem.

Resources and Barriers

Eastlake has numerous resources to assist residents with mental health and substance use. These include:

- Court programs
- The National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)
- Crossroads
- Signature Health
- Laurelwood
- Extended Housing
- Telehealth
- Faith-based recovery ministries
- Case workers and counselors

Participants identified several barriers to accessing existing mental health resources. These included the following:

- People are not familiar with existing resources
- Stigma around mental health
- Stigma among some groups around reaching out for assistance
- Cultural issues, particularly in African-American population
- It can be difficult to obtain mental health services in a timely manner

Participants identified several additional resources that they felt would help in addressing mental health and substance use and misuse in the Eastlake area, which included:

- Reduction of high healthcare and medication costs
- Funding for more programs
- Narcan for school clinics – it was used at least twice on campus during the 2022-23 school year
- More mental health counseling

Next Steps

Results of these interviews/focus groups will be reviewed with

- Lake County General Health District (LCGHD) leadership to determine findings that can be addressed by LCGHD programs
- Lake County's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) partners to determine findings that can be addressed by partner agencies and any adjustments to be made to the Lake County CHIP to accommodate any new activities resulting from these findings.