

2023 PRIORITY PLATFORM

United Way of Allen County engages in advocacy to advance a better quality of life for all in Allen County.

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, individuals and families in our community have been faced with unprecedented circumstances. Rising costs in housing, food, and transportation have surpassed any gains made in wage increases causing financial stress on households. Families of all socio-economic backgrounds struggle to stay in or return to the workforce to further their own skills and education as childcare costs with limited childcare capacity force difficult decisions. These factors contribute to the surge in the mental health crisis.

For Allen County and Indiana to thrive, vulnerable families must have access to services that not only meet their basic needs but also support all individuals and families at home and in the workforce. Additionally, United Way of Allen County advocates for a reduction in administrative burden and administrative costs within government programs so providers can cover costs and focus on delivery of services.

United Way of Allen County seeks to address critical community issues by advocating for the following four priorities:

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



- **68% of Allen County children under the age of 6 need childcare; however, Allen County only has licensed capacity to serve 44% of those children. (Brighter Futures Indiana, 2022)**
- **Allen County families spend an average of 12% of their gross annual income for one child in care. (Brighter Futures Indiana, 2022)**
- **39% of adults in Allen County have a high school diploma or less, and an additional 22% of adults in Allen County have some college education, but no degree. (U.S. Census Bureau)**

United Way of Allen County advocates for a holistic approach to address educational opportunities beginning in early childhood through post-secondary education. By increasing the capacity of high-quality childcare and early learning experiences, children are prepared to enter school ready to learn and parents can return to or remain in the workforce. Utilizing education as a tool to break the cycle of poverty contributes to a strong foundation for lifelong learning, college completion rates, talent recruitment and retainment, and workforce stability.

FOOD SECURITY



- **43,760 households in Allen County do not have enough food or know where their next meal is coming from. (2022 County Health Rankings)**
- **Prior to the pandemic, households in Allen County experienced a 45% increase in food costs for both families and single individuals. (ALICE in Indiana: A Financial Hardship Study, 2020 Indiana Report)**

United Way of Allen County advocates for policies and financial support to ensure access to basic food needs and healthy food options in every neighborhood.

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UNITED BY MISSION, DRIVEN BY IMPACT

MISSION

United Way of Allen County
exists to
BOLDLY IMPACT CRITICAL
COMMUNITY ISSUES

HOUSING STABILITY



- In the most recent report from Eviction Lab (2018), Fort Wayne had over 5,300 evictions filed, amounting to 14.5 households daily –A 58% increase over 2016.
- 44% of renter-occupied housing in the county is housing cost-burdened, which means they are spending more than 30% of household income on rent and utilities. (U.S. Census Bureau)

United Way of Allen County advocates for policies and financial support to ensure stable, affordable, safe, and decent housing for Allen County residents. To help individuals strengthen credit scores, achieve financial stability, and afford adequate housing, United Way advocates to eliminate predatory loan practices and expand programs that improve financial wellness.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS



- 65% of individuals declined seeing a mental health professional despite acknowledgement of the benefit of doing so. (2021 United Way of Allen County Community Insights Survey)
- 37% of the population not seeking treatment indicated cost was a contributing factor.
- Only 38% of women who experienced post-partum depression sought treatment. (Healthier Moms and Babies Infant Mortality Community Needs Assessment 2022)

United Way of Allen County advocates for access to affordable, quality healthcare, and investments in public health. These strategies will help address rising healthcare costs and underlying behaviors and conditions, including those impacting mental health that lead to growing disparities in health outcomes for our neighbors. We will work to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health conditions that sometimes prevent residents from seeking the help they need.

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