

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Condition 2015 Report

## About the Community Condition Project

In 2009, United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) developed the Community Condition Project to create a “big picture” view of our community and well-being. We compared data from five counties (Benton, Jones, Cedar, Linn and Iowa) to national and state trends to put our quality of life into perspective. This year’s update to the project highlights strengths and challenges in our neighborhoods, while inviting the public to take action and shape a better future for all of us.

## Project Findings

Some things are improving.

- More Linn county residents have education beyond a high school diploma.
- The number of Iowans with health insurance has increased.
- Unemployment is on the decline.



### Education

- 99% of all students in Linn County report they are planning to graduate from high school; only 69% of low-income students graduate.
- In United Way’s five-county area, only 61% of low-income students in fourth grade are proficient in reading, compared to 85% of the rest of the students.
- About 62% of youth in the Cedar Rapids metro area are engaged in school, while 60% of youth in the same area are hopeful in school.



### Financial Stability

- Nearly 17% of Iowa households are earning incomes below what is needed to meet their basic standard of living, including childcare, food, housing, clothing, healthcare and transportation.
- 31.5% of children in Linn County are raised by a single parent, and one in three students is eligible for free or reduced lunch during the school year.
- The number of homeless individuals found in Cedar Rapids continues to be an issue. During the past four years, we have experienced a 34% increase in people without stable housing in our community.



### Health

- In 2010, 14% of Linn County residents reported their health was fair or poor.
- One in four adults has a mental health disorder and less than one-third receive needed treatment. Meanwhile, one in five children has a mental health disorder and less than one-half receive treatment in a given year.
- More than 1,500 children in Linn County experienced maltreatment in 2012. There is a strong connection between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and serious health and mental health effects in later life.

## Working Toward Change

We have made significant progress, but we can do even more to benefit our community. As UWECI moves forward, we will focus on achieving our community goals and key strategies such as:

- **Work Together:** We will work to build a shared vision with our partners and accountability for success. To make progress, we must address the causes and not respond only to symptoms.
- **Start Early:** Numerous studies show that the greatest return on investment occurs when interventions are strengths-based and begin early.
- **Build Resilience:** We can give children and families the opportunity to develop their well-being by removing barriers to education, financial stability and health.

These elements create the foundation for successful change. With your support, we can continue to improve the quality of life in our community. For a more in-depth look at the statistics above, please see our 2015 Community Condition Report.

[www.uweci.org/community-condition](http://www.uweci.org/community-condition)