

Samuel Workman, Director

Institute for Policy Research & Public Affairs
 Rockefeller School of Policy and Politics
 West Virginia University
 Morgantown, WV 26506



304-293-9306

sam.workman@mail.wvu.edu[wvu-policy-research](https://www.wvu.edu/policy-research)policyresearch.wvu.edu/

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Services for Families and Children in the Greater Kanawha Valley

Executive Summary

This study examines service and provider availability in the area served by *The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation*. A key difficulty in ascertaining which services are available pertains to services provided to county residents by organizations not physically located there. Service provision that requires transportation to adjacent counties is more difficult for the vulnerable populations likely to require said services. In addition, service density and diversity of are not uniformly distributed over the six counties under study.

Topic

- Social Services, Families, Children

Key Findings - Service Density & Diversity

- Kanawha and Fayette County have the greatest provider density. This density centers in Charleston, Fayetteville, and Oak Hill and connects through the Kanawha Valley.
- Only Kanawha County has a majority of providers physically within the county at just over 88 percent. The remaining counties have less than half of providers physically within the county, though Fayette County falls just short at nearly 47 percent. No other municipality has more than eight providers (Hurricane).
- Transportation for services is a pernicious problem in the region. From county geographic centers to Charleston, Fayetteville, and Oak Hill, one-way distance to service averages nearly 62 miles. On average, travel time for round trips from these county centers is 2.68 hours.
- While Kanawha County has the highest service density, Fayette County has the highest service diversity within the county. Within data provided by *Think Kids*, Fayette County lacks only employment assistance and child care services. It houses 14 of the 18 other services within the county.
- Community service assistance and programs hold the highest number of providers in the data. These are followed closely by mental health services. No other categories approach these two. Both community and mental health services see their highest numbers in Kanawha County.
- Food and clothing and healthcare assistance are densest in Fayette County, though many providers do not have physical locations there.

Recommendations

- This data should be collected annually and paired with a short survey that assesses both the services as they look outward to clientele and inwardly at the health and vibrancy of the service provision community.
- A more formal and systematic database and entry that captures multi-location service providers with separate organizational features should be developed. This would allow a more systematic and accurate assessment of geographical variability—especially for regional service providers.
- The data collection should allow for diversity of service provision but require ranking of services that are the organization's focus. Rank ordering would yield a fine-grained catalog of services available and prioritized in the region. This data, combined with a survey, would greatly inform strategic investments in community development and resilience moving forward.

IPRPA Partnerships

Please contact the *Institute for Policy Research and Public Affairs* (IPRPA) for questions and technical assistance in pursuing any recommendations outlined here.