

2024 High Risk and Homeless Youth Community Services Gaps Analysis

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Introduction and Purpose

In the spring of 2024, the Ozarks Alliance on Ending Homelessness (OAEH) conducted a High Risk and Homeless Community Services Youth Gaps Analysis in alignment with the OAEH's current strategic action plan. The Strategic Action plan is the OAEH's comprehensive plan to accomplish every homeless service agency's ultimate goal: to alleviate and end homelessness in our community. Both the local System Analysis of Need and the Federal All-In Plan to End Homelessness serve as the platform to build the OAEH's Strategic Action Plan. The plan notes the following broad goals:

- Decreasing the number of homelessness by 2025 by 25% in alignment with federal initiatives
- Increasing access to critical care services, such as health and mental health care
- Incentives for the development of affordable housing
- Bolster supportive services to increase stability and retention in permanent housing

These initiatives and focus areas are critical for the local community, as the OAEH continues to bring in federal funding to address a growing homeless population, expand its capacity to meet the needs of all those experiencing homelessness, and as the OAEH works towards a more robust and comprehensive system.

Summary of 2019 GAPS Analysis

In the summer of 2019, members of OAEH Homeless Youth Task Force (HYTF) convened to update its 2017 Gaps Analysis. In 2019, this analysis relied upon an inventory of services available to youth in the community (Springfield/Greene, Christian, and Webster counties), as well as a survey of youth needs and community responses to those needs. In addition, several data sources were considered when assessing youth needs, including the 2019 High Risk and Homeless Youth Report, data from Springfield Public Schools, and feedback from local youth service providers and youth who have experienced homelessness. **Four specific gaps were identified based upon the 2019 services inventory, community survey, and knowledge of local systems of care: These included: (1) Healthcare access for homeless and unstably housed youth; (2) Facilities and housing support for homeless and unstably housed youth; (3) Flexible funds to increase housing options and facilitate shelter diversion and homelessness prevention; and (4) Resources to address the needs of subpopulations within the overall population of homeless and unstably housed youth (e.g. youth who are pregnant/parenting, exiting the foster care system, identify as LGBTQ+, ages 13-17).**

Purpose of GAPS Analysis 2024/Data Collection Methodology

In February of 2024, the 2019 GAPS Analysis was reviewed by the HYTF and it was apparent that it needed to be updated and restructured. Not only had 4 years passed but a global pandemic had also occurred that illuminated and tested many community poverty related stress points. As a result, the HYTF and the Ozarks Christian, Greene, and Webster Counties Continuum of Care conducted four focus groups in the month of April of 2024, including focus groups among: (1) A DYS/Foster Care Youth Focus Group; (2) A Younger Youth Focus Group; (3) An Older Youth Focus Group; and a (4) Service Provider Focus Group. At each of the youth focus groups, demographic surveys were provided to youth in attendance. These focus groups were conducted to focus on specific key topics that have been repetitive issues within the high-risk youth community (i.e., housing, healthcare, education, and parenting/domestic

violence). Given the size of the youth focus groups, it is significant to note that results did not vary greatly according to demographics and among a few differences, none were not statistically significant, therefore the results discussed below are not discussed or distinguished by reported demographics. It is also significant to note that in the previous, 2019 GAPS Analysis, there was no input from youth with lived experience. **The 2024 gaps analysis includes feedback from youth with lived experience, a significant component in ensuring representation in proposed solutions designed to benefit and serve marginalized populations.**

Youth Homelessness and Those At Risk for Homelessness in Springfield, MO

In 2023 (as is conducted bi-annually), the Homeless Youth Task Force of the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness and the Ozarks Christian, Greene, and Webster Counties Continuum of Care conducted its 10th High-Risk and Homeless Youth Assessment Survey conducted since 2007. **In 2023, 49 youth completed and returned a questionnaire. Of those that responded to the survey in 2023, all were between the ages of 14-23 (the age range utilized in Housing and Urban Development and other federal agencies to define a ‘youth’ is between the ages of 12-24). The majority of youth (65%) that were homeless or at risk for homelessness identified as ‘White,’ and 42% as either Springfield, Missouri or the greater metropolitan area of Springfield (Nixa, Republic, Ozark, Ash Grove) natives.** Eighty percent identified as State of Missouri as their home, approximately half identified as either formerly a ward of the state or in foster care, 2 as military veterans, 12 percent of youth had children and/or were expecting a child, and 90% were either high school graduates or currently enrolled in some form of education (middle school, high school, college and/or high school equivalent programs). These demographic percentages closely mirror 2019 and 2021 HRHY survey demographics, with the exception of nearly 23% more racial and ethnic diversity representation in survey respondents in 2023 than in 2019. It is also significant to note that in prior reports, and while not represented in the 2023 survey, respondents have been as young as 12 years old through 24 years of age.

Of 49 youth, approximately 47% reported to experiencing homelessness at least once in their lifetime, 26% of youth that were surveyed reported at the time of the survey as currently homeless on the day of the survey, and nearly 23% of all respondents reported that they considered where they stayed in the week prior to the survey unsafe. Among the sample for 2023 as in 2021, there was a reported difference in experiencing homelessness among those that identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community and gender non-conforming compared to those that identified as heterosexual and cisgender (see section IX “Subgroups and rates of homelessness on their own”). Previous reports, as well as national data suggest that non heterosexual identifying, as well as gender non conforming youth, are often at higher risk for running away or being asked to leave their home, are at a higher risk for homelessness in general, and are at a greater risk for exploitation once homeless (National Council of State Legislatures, n.d.). Members of the LGBTQ+ population and youth of color were disproportionately more likely to report having witnessed or being a victim of traumatic events in their lifetime including while homeless and being exploited in work related situations while homeless. LGBTQ+ youth were also more likely to report sexual exploitation while homeless. Female identifying youth and LGBTQ+ youth were also more likely to report staying somewhere unsafe, staying with a sexual partner longer for safety, and Similar to national data, those that reported being in the foster care system or a ward of the state at some point in their lives were also more likely to report experiencing homelessness.

As also with past reports and mirroring national data as well, exposure to significant life trauma (namely emotional, physical, or sexual abuse) and difficult family backgrounds appear to be primary factors that contribute to young people being homeless on their own, while lack of rental history, lack of income, unemployment/underemployment and limited shelter and access to basic need resources are likely important secondary factors.

Included in this survey was also the option for youth to discuss what they believe would be beneficial for those experiencing homelessness. **In 2023, youth reported a: (1) Need for more short term/crisis shelter/housing: 59% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more short term shelter for youth. 28.6% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed; a (2) Need for more long term shelter/housing: 71% agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more long term shelter and housing for youth that are homeless or at risk for homelessness. Sixteen percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed; a (3) Need more transitional living programs for pregnant or parenting teens: 75.5% felt that Springfield needs a transitional living program for pregnant or parenting teens. Fourteen percent neither agreed or disagreed.** In addition to these services, substance abuse services, NARCAN, affordable rental housing, day shelters, transportation services, accessible resources for autistic youth, financial literacy programs, additional food resource options, mentorship, and STD resources were noted as also needed for youth experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness. **The 2024 gaps analysis was intended to further explore youth reported and service provider reported gaps in community services for high risk and homeless youth.**

What Services Are Available To Assist High Risk and Homeless Youth?

2024 Gaps Analysis: Youth Services Inventory

As part of the 2024 gaps analysis as has been a part of previous gaps analysis reports, a youth services inventory was conducted asking community agencies and nonprofits to identify the services that these agencies provide or can provide to high risk and homeless youth. The inventory spreadsheet is located as an attachment to this report. A service map based on this inventory is also provided as an attachment to this report. **It is significant to note that based on the youth services inventory, there are many agencies that are currently providing many of the services that have been noted as gaps in service by both youth and service providers. While this may give the illusion that there are many community resources to meet these needs, difficulties in service coordination, accessibility, or simply not enough of a particular service (i.e. enough food resources) were noted by both youth and practitioners in 2024 focus groups and are considered significant factors when interpreting reported community service gaps.**

What Are The 2024 Identified Gaps in Community Services Available to Assist High Risk and Homeless Youth?

2024 Youth Reported Gaps in Services

Youth Services/Youth Demographics Survey

In April of 2024, 14 youth ages 13-24 that were identified as unstably housed participated in a brief survey that asked youth to identify reasons for homelessness as well as factors that contributed to the inability to secure housing. Of those that identified as being homeless on their own, many reported being too young, the inability to access income and employment, long waitlists for housing, no rental history, prior evictions, mental health, and a general lack of community services. Among those that were surveyed as being or soon to be transitioned from foster care (N=5), added components of a criminal record, social networks, trauma/substance abuse were noted as significant additional barriers in obtaining stable housing. As noted above, this survey also requested demographic information and results were not statistically significant among age, gender, and racial/ethnic categories.

Younger Youth Focus Group Results (Ages 13-17)

A focus group that consisted of 5 youth ages 13-18 that were experiencing precarious/unstable housing or who had experienced homeless noted the following services as gaps in community services:

Category	Reported Gaps In Service
Basic Needs	Food, more community fridges, affordable clothing, food preparation instruction, hygiene products; quicker (less cumbersome) access to shelters, food, and employment opportunities.
Life Skills/Work Readiness Skills/Education	Education on bill management, budgeting, assistance with finding a job with good pay; assistance with building a resume and interview skills
Housing	More transitional/supportive housing; assistance finding affordable housing and/or finding a roommate in order to split housing costs.
Transportation	More convenient bus routes; more shared vehicle options; assistance in obtaining a driver's license.
Healthcare	More gender affirming care opportunities; more counselors who accept insurance

Older Youth Focus Group Results

A focus group that consisted of 4 youth ages 18-24 that were experiencing precarious/unstable housing or who had experienced homeless noted the following services as gaps in community services:

Category	Reported Gaps In Service
Basic Needs	Food, shower access, clothing, Quicker (less cumbersome) access to shelters, food, and employment opportunities.
Life Skills/Work Readiness Skills/Education	Appt scheduling assistance/guidance for making appointments, Budgeting education, guidance for building credit, education on how to start a business
Housing	Education on how to become a homeowner/preparation for homeownership, Basic home maintenance, How to call/talk to landlords, utility assistance, more crisis/emergency shelters.
Transportation	Assistance in registering a vehicle and obtaining a driver's license, more community general transportation options
Healthcare	More mental health care resources, access to medication without a doctor's prescription (i.e.,

	cold medicine if sick), More access and assistance to basic medical care.
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Among transitioning foster care youth, in addition to the gaps noted above, additional supportives services were identified as gaps in current services including wrap-around care; reminders for appointments, case management, and ongoing follow up.

2024 Service Provider Identified Gaps in Services

As part of the process of assessing community service gaps, 16 youth service agencies participated in four separate focus groups on topics that included domestic/intimate partner violence, as well as education, healthcare, and housing and were asked to identify needs and gaps in service among each category:

Reported Domestic Violence/Parenting Identified Gaps in Service

- Life skills classes, parenting education, childcare resources, financial literacy
- Maternity homes, more crisis/transitional/long term housing options
- More convenient bus routes; shared vehicle options; assistance in obtaining a driver’s license.
- Connections with counseling and mental health services, domestic violence education, resources for LGBTQ+ youth, resources for those with disabilities.

Service providers also noted a general lack of resources for foster youth, the need for unrestricted funding to apply to intimate partner violence and parenting service needs, a general lack of funding and staffing for such needs, a general lack of services for youth under 18 years of age, a lack of in-home services/support for youth and older youth, a lack of providers focusing on human trafficking of youth, and a lack of early intervention education as significant intimate partner violence and parenting community service gaps in the community.

Reported Education Specific Focus Group Reported Gaps in Service:

- A lack of understanding and education on alternative paths to higher education (i.e., trade school).
- A lack of youth case conferencing.
- A lack of advocates and support that provides youth with direction.
- Support for First generation students with language barriers and/or lack of parent support.
- Pressure from guardians to attend specific programs/careers.
- A lack of affordable technology and WiFi services.
- A lack of housing resources when partaking in higher education.
- A lack of knowledge or support with scholarships, leading to student loan debt.
- “Safe Schools Act” preventing youth to school from home

As with the previous focus group, funding, education provider education, knowledge of alternative paths, pathway opportunities (such as job shadowing) were considered solutions to many of these concerns.

Housing Specific Focus Group Reported Gaps in Service:

- A lack of case management.
- Difficulty finding placement opportunities for youth that are not in the foster care system.
- Discrepancies in laws and regulations for youth that are not in foster care and for those that are in the foster care system.
- A lack of programs for youth that educate and expand on rental deposits, rent, utilities (especially for youth that are not in the foster care system).
- A lack of qualified minor housing options (aged 17).
- “Raise the Age” – turning 18 while in a Division of Youth Service facility, and then having nowhere to go.
- Application processes for housing/deposits can be too costly for youth (i.e.: there are not enough resources for youth, especially those who may have some money or who are not actually homeless)

Solutions provided in the focus group included diversion programs, life skills programs, and more rapid rehousing options for youth.

Healthcare Specific Focus Group Reported Gaps in Services:

- Unknown if youth under 18 years of age can apply for services on their own.
- The length of time it takes for Medicaid to approve an application.
- Costly medication expenses for youth.
- A general lack of mental health care
- Extensive waitlists for mental health care services.
- A lack of mental health crisis services.
- A lack of parental education on youth mental health.
- A lack of “warm handoffs” of children/parents to additional resources.
- A lack of family therapy/affordable family therapy.
- A lack of ability to make contact with youth.
- Barriers to underage healthcare.
- A lack of dental care (i.e. only 30% of dentists in Missouri accept Medicaid).

2024 Combined Results Summary and Conclusions

Youth Combined Results Summary

Among both younger (13-17) youth and older (17-24), while there exists some differences in life experience, life stages, and rites of passage into adulthood (and therefore some age specific unique needs), all reported needs that are also reflective of larger community needs and also been identified as needs among adults and families in the Ozarks, particularly since the onset of the pandemic. These include access to: food (food costs have increased significantly since 2020), affordable housing

(rental costs have also risen significantly), high/living wage employment (an ongoing national and local discussion), work readiness skills and supportive education, more transportation options (particularly among a fragmented transportation in the Springfield MSA), and additional mental health and mental health crisis services (a national and local reported need among many communities). Youth also reported the need for additional supportive services and coordinated case management. Of particular significance is that both focus youth age groups identified streamline or less cumbersome application processes for access to shelter, food, and employment as a community need in accessing services.

Service Provider Combined Results Summary

Service providers reported similar needs and gaps in service for youth particularly around supportive services and coordinated case management. Needs were also mentioned among service providers that are reflective of larger community and larger national concerns. These include resources and services where the need for such resources and services greatly exceeds the amount of service available or accessible. Concerns such as affordable housing and crisis shelter, a general lack of funding for additional resources and staff, a lack of accessible physical or mental health care for low income persons, application processing delays and waitlists (considered to be due to state and government staff capacity), bureaucracies, laws and policies, as well as intersections with factors and needs within other institutions (such as the foster care system), were noted as presenting significant barriers to high risk and homeless youth in the Ozarks and those agencies that seek to serve them. **One of the most actionable items in addressing reported gaps in addition to coordinated case management noted in focus groups was the need and desire for additional financial literacy, work readiness, and life skills training for youth (such as those noted by the ‘Education Focus Group’).** It is also significant to note that both high risk and homeless youth as well as service providers noted the significant need for community services that are sensitive and trained to address the needs of diverse and marginalized communities.

Conclusions

The pandemic has tested all of the Ozarks communities' poverty-related stress points. Previous poverty related studies in the Ozarks region have identified housing, childcare, transportation, access to nutritious food, living wage employment opportunities, as well as healthcare disparities as significant barriers to reducing poverty and homelessness. The pandemic illuminated these challenges for the Springfield MSA and greater Ozarks region as it did for many communities across the State, United States, and internationally. Subsequent inflation since the pandemic has also been evident in these same domains. Housing costs have increased dramatically, food prices have also gone up significantly, healthcare shortages, transportation and gas have increased, and all while wages have remained relatively stagnant (particularly for younger workers). The same investments in affordable housing, food access, employment that offers a living wage, affordable childcare options, and healthcare access that are beneficial for the larger community are also beneficial for the high risk and homeless youth population. Additional reported opportunities that could be beneficial include investments in coordinated case management and additional life/work readiness/financial literacy skills training.

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Empowering Youth

SPRINGFIELD MISSOURI

1 KVC Missouri Youth Shelter Empowering Youth

1212 W Lombard
Springfield, MO 65806
24 hour crisis line: 417-861-4244

2 Missouri Mentoring Partnership

1126 N Broadway
Springfield, MO 65802
417-839-3134

3 Rare Breed Drop -In Center

301 N Main
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-6400

4 Youth Connect Center

425 W McDaniel
Springfield, MO 65806
417-708-4117

5 One Door O'Reilly Center for Hope

1518 E Dale
Springfield, MO 65803
417-225-7499

6 Midtown Carnegie Library

397 E Central
Springfield, MO 65802
417-862-0135

7 Health Department

227 E Chestnut
Springfield, MO 65802
417-864-1658

8 Gay and Lesbian Community Center of the Ozarks (GLO)

518 E Commercial
Springfield, MO 65802
417-869-3978

9 Social Security Office

1570 W Battlefield
Springfield, MO 65807
877-850-7824

10 Southwest Center for Independent Living

2864 S Nettleton
Springfield, MO 65807
417-886-1188

11 Career Center

2900 E Sunshine
Springfield, MO 65804
417-887-4343

12 Aids Project of the Ozarks (APO)

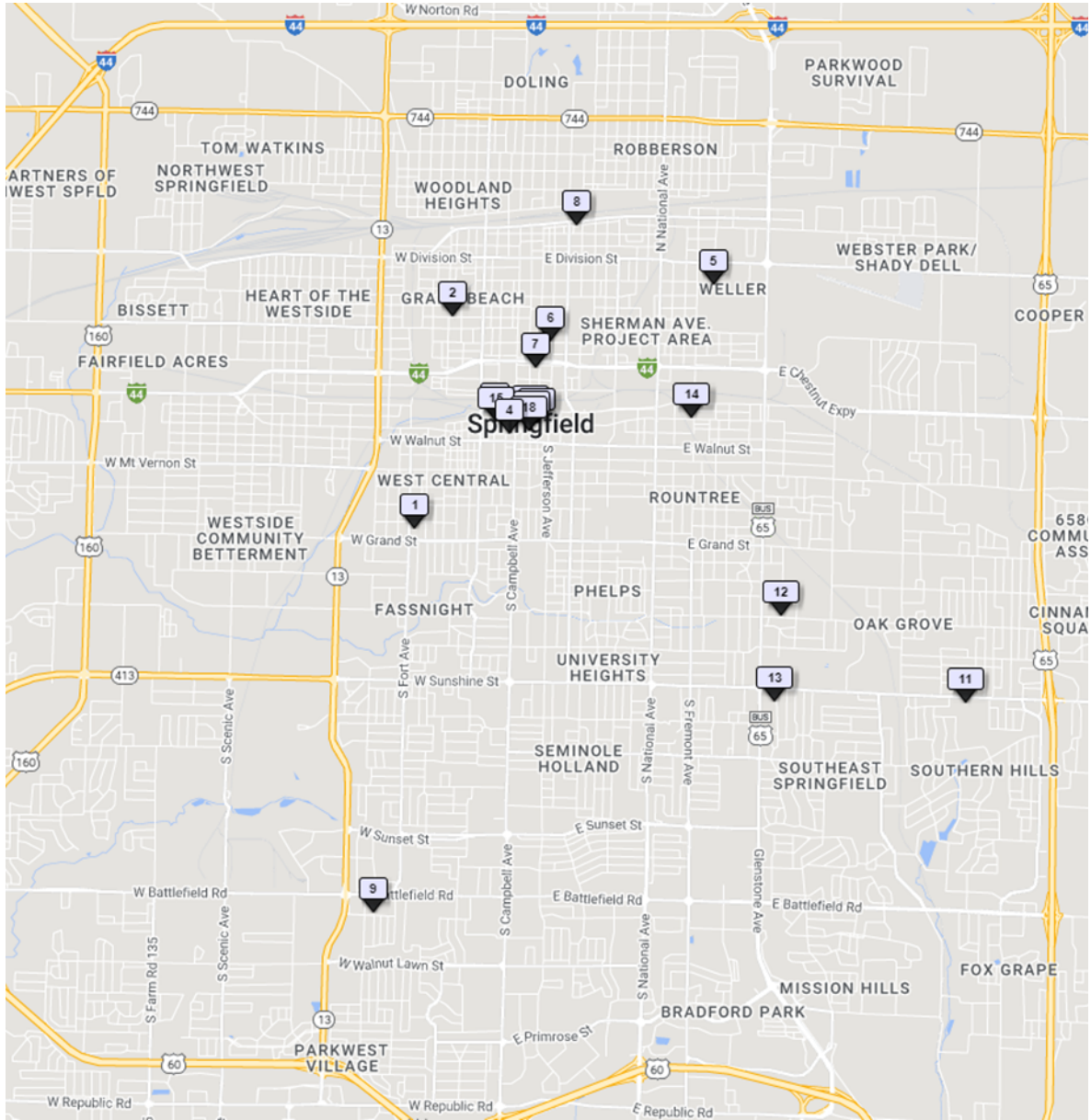
1901 E Bennett, Ste D
Springfield, MO 65804
417-881-1900

13 Job Corps

1835 S Stewart, #119
Springfield, MO 65804
417-887-8130

14 Springfield Public Schools

1359 E St Louis St
Springfield, MO 65802
417-523-0000



The Office of Students in Transition, Springfield Public Schools 417-523-0352
Provides assistance and support for youth & families without permanent housing to access education, school transportation assistance, stabilizing resources, and more.

To get a new/replacement ID at the DMV: You will need an official birth certificate, social security card, and proof of residence.

To get a birth certificate at the health department: You will need photo ID or you can bring a first degree relative with ID.

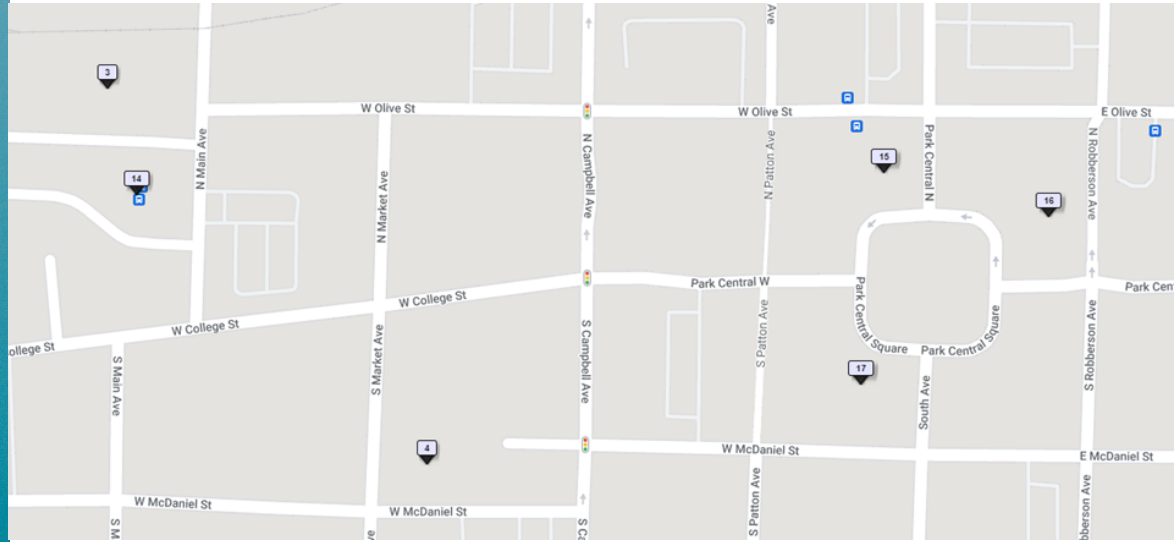
To get a social security card: You will need an official birth certificate and one form of ID that is not expired and shows your name, date of birth, and a recent photograph.

To apply for Food Stamps, TANF, or Medicaid: You will need photo ID, social security card, birth certificate, or document proving identity, and proof of residence.

Free Narcan locations: <https://www.nomodeaths.org/where-to-get-naloxone>



DOWNTOWN SPRINGFIELD



3 Rare Breed Drop -In Center
301 N Main
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-6400

4 Youth Connect Center
425 W McDaniel
Springfield, MO 65806
417-708-4117

15 Bus Transfer Station
211 N Main
Springfield, MO 65806
417-831-8782

16 Department of Motor Vehicles
149 Park Central Square, Ste 252
Springfield, MO 65806
417-869-5100

17 Department of Social Services
101 Park Central Square
Springfield, MO 65806
417-895-6000

18 Park Central Library
128 Park Central Square
Springfield, MO 65806
417-831-1342

FOOD PANTRIES

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
988

Burrell Crisis Line
1-800-494-7355

Runaway Safeline
1-800-RUNAWAY

United Way Resource Line
211

Schweitzer Church
2701 E Sunshine
Springfield, MO 65804
417-881-6800

C-Street Connect
1616 N Robberson Ave.
Springfield, MO - 65803
417-831-1818

Crosslines
615 N Glenstone Ave.
Springfield, MO - 65802
417-869-0563

Salvation Army
1707 W. Chestnut Expy.
Springfield, MO - 65807
417-862-5509

Victory Mission
700 W Chase Street
Springfield, MO - 65803
417-864-2246

Center City Christian
Church
418 S. Kimbrough Ave.
Springfield, MO - 65806
417- 869-2865

St. Joseph Catholic Church
1114 N. Main Street
Springfield, MO - 65802
417-865-1112

Hand Extended Outreach
2157 North Prospect Ave.
Springfield, MO - 65803
417-848-5433

Southside Senior Center
2215 S. Fremont Ave.
Springfield, MO - 65804
417-890-1313

SHELTER
SGF APP



Connect with
community
resources