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PRESS RELEASE

Over One-Third of Dodge County Households Struggling to Make Ends Meet Financially

Most recent United Way of Dodge County ALICE® Report reveals over 35% of households faced financial hardship despite COVID-driven social support.

DODGE COUNTY, WI – May 26, 2023—Despite the presence of many COVID-era social and financial support measures, a resounding 35% of Dodge County’s households had difficulty affording basic necessities like housing, food, transportation, child care and internet access. This statistic was revealed in the state’s most recent ALICE Report released by the United Way of Wisconsin in partnership with United For ALICE and local United Ways statewide.

ALICE, which stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed, describes households earning more than the federal poverty level (FPL), but less than the state’s basic cost of living - which the report calls the ALICE Threshold. In Dodge County, 27% of households are identified as ALICE, while another 8% fall below the FPL.

Between 2019 and 2021, there was a 31% increase in Dodge County households that fell below the ALICE Threshold. While the COVID-19 pandemic brought employment shifts, health struggles, and school/business closures in 2021, it also spurred unprecedented public assistance through pandemic relief measures. At the time of data collection, several vital pandemic assistance measures were in place. The expiration of such crucial support measures, along with the continued disproportionate increase in the cost of necessities in comparison to household income in recent years, suggests that substantially more households are struggling to make ends meet in 2023. Measures of difficulty such as sustained high levels of food insufficiency, feelings of anxiety and depression, continued difficulty paying bills, increased medical debt and reduced savings provide indications that this trend is indeed beginning to take hold, not only in Dodge County, but statewide as well.



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Key Takeaways from the Dodge County ALICE Report include:

- ALICE Households: 27% (state average: 23%)
- Households in Poverty (FPL): 8% (state average: 11%)
- In 2019, 9,705 households in Dodge County were below the ALICE Threshold and by 2021 this number changed to 12,680, (a 31% change).
- The cost of basic needs outpaces wages: In 2021, household costs in Dodge County were well above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of \$12,880 for a single adult and \$26,500 for a family of four.
- Financial hardship is not evenly distributed amongst population cohorts:
 - Single and co-habiting households – 20% ALICE, 8% FPL
 - Families with children – 18% ALICE, 9% FPL
 - 65 and older – 45% ALICE, 9% FPL

“The ALICE Report provides us with a base each year to help assess and reallocate resources to best meet the needs of our county. Although this data shifts as prevalent needs change, the United Way of Dodge County is committed to continued collaboration with our local agencies to help residents in Dodge County rise above educational, financial, and health and wellness restraints,” stated Executive Director Harper Mruk. “The investments provided by our generous businesses, organizations and residents through workplace campaigns, community events, individual giving and other opportunities provides us with resources to eliminate barriers and help our neighbors reach their potential.”

The United Way of Dodge County is committed to working with our local communities to co-create responses to these realities. It takes cross-sector collaboration, collective impact and



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inspiring innovation to create new approaches to address these challenges. Everyone is encouraged to get involved to support our local neighborhoods.

About United Way of Dodge County

At United Way of Dodge County (UWDC), our mission is to improve lives by mobilizing and empowering the caring power of Dodge County. The UWDC envisions a world where all individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income stability and personal safety and well-being. We strive to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion clarity to our daily work. To join our plight, please visit unitedwayofdodgecounty.org or call (920)885-2488.

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