



UNITED WAY

2025 POLICY PLATFORM

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) envisions a community where every person belongs and every person thrives. Our **2030 Bold Goals** guide and focus our work toward that vision, with policy and advocacy central to reaching our targets in **education, healthy aging and community stability**.



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley



EDUCATION

2030 Bold Goal: Increase the percentage of students ready to learn and successful in school so they can graduate ready for life, college or career.



UNITED WAY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

19,994 STUDENTS, 34 SCHOOLS, 5 DISTRICTS

Schools have the resources and support they need and can offer them in a coordinated manner so that students' academics and social well-being thrive.

The United Way Community School model directs resources and supports to students and families in our highest-need neighborhoods. We are committed to expanding and deepening the network of UW Community Schools and ensuring that more schools can utilize this model to improve academic, social-emotional, and family financial stability outcomes.

Over the past year, United Way Community Schools reported:

- Academic growth across all grade levels, outpacing the state and other schools in the region
- 38% increase in student attendance and 229% increase in family engagement since 2021
- 94% of families improved stability with access to food, health care and financial supports

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Promoting Community Schools as an effective wraparound model for students and families to receive educational and other important services and resources
- Increased funding for full-service Community Schools
- Enhanced investments for state and local funding to expand access to high-quality out-of-school programs

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION/KINDERGARTEN READINESS

12,000 FAMILIES

reached through the **Talk, Read, Sing** early literacy campaign

1,484 CHILDREN

received early education programming through **kindergarten-readiness supports**

Children in our region have access to consistent, high-quality and affordable pre-kindergarten, childcare and early learning opportunities.

High quality early learning opportunities are critical for kindergarten readiness and lead to improved math and language skills, healthy development, and reduced grade repetition. We continue to advocate for access to high-quality, affordable pre-kindergarten and early learning opportunities, as well as trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, practices and resources in early childhood settings.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- State and federal investments in early childhood education to provide training, certification and equitable compensation for childhood education workers
- Expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities via Early Head Start, Head Start and high-quality Pre-K programs



HEALTHY AGING

2030 Bold Goal: Increase the percentage of older adults connected with resources to improve their health and quality of life.



RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVERS

We are a dementia-friendly Greater Lehigh Valley, where caregivers have the resources, information and tools they need and those with dementia are supported.

United Way supports programs that provide safety measures for older adults with Alzheimer's, dementia or other cognitive impairments. **Project Lifesaver**, a search-and-rescue program, ensures individuals with dementia who are prone to wandering can be located and brought home safely. **Silver Alert** is a program that notifies the public when an older adult with dementia or other cognitive impairment is missing. Pennsylvania is one of 22 states that do not offer this program.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Increasing state investments into Project Lifesaver to expand and sustain the program statewide
- Establishing a Silver Alert program in Pennsylvania
- Supporting adult day centers and respite services for caregivers of older adults

75% OF CAREGIVERS

participating in United Way's caregiver support programs improved their **quality of life**

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER ADULTS

25,000 PEOPLE LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA (EXPECTED TO TRIPLE BY 2050)

Older adults are connected to the resources and supports they need to improve their health and quality of life.

Over half of all older adults in our region are having trouble making ends meet. Improving access to resources also improves access to opportunities for social connection. Knowing these resources are available and how to access them can alleviate feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Strong social connections can boost a person's life span by 50%.

■ WE SUPPORT:

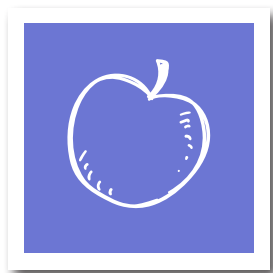
- Expanding access to SNAP, senior food boxes, housing and utility supports
- Supporting senior centers and community hubs, which provide programming, access to resources and social connections

4,102 SENIORS

connected to resources through United Way-supported solutions

95% OF SENIORS

served report **increased social connectedness**



COMMUNITY STABILITY

2030 Bold Goal: Increase community safety and stability through food, housing and mental health services.

FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR SENIORS AND FAMILIES

Those living under the ALICE threshold are financially stable, with access to safe and affordable housing, healthy food and are able to access resources and supports when needed.

Nearly half of families living in the Lehigh Valley are living paycheck to paycheck. One in 10 people are food insecure, including one in every six kids in the Lehigh Valley. Thousands are at-risk of homelessness or eviction. In addition, rising housing and food costs are putting additional pressure on household budgets.

ALICE stands for Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed. This term describes households who are above the federal poverty level, but who don't make enough money for their basic needs. They are working and paying taxes but not earning enough to be financially stable.

75% OF SENIORS

struggle to **make ends meet**

46% OF FAMILIES

experience **serious financial instability** on a daily basis

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Enacting a state Working Pennsylvanian Tax Credit of at least 25% of the federal tax credit
- Extending the Child Tax Credit to provide additional tax relief to households with children
- Legislation that seals access to eviction records in certain cases such as no-fault evictions
- Support for the federal AmeriCorps program, which enhances nonprofit agencies' ability to serve ALICE households

ENHANCING CONNECTIONS TO RESOURCES VIA PA 211

36,212 CALLS

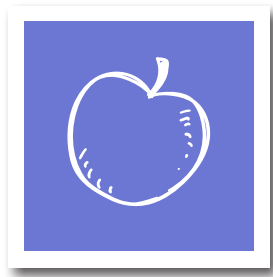
and text messages to PA 211 from residents in the Greater Lehigh Valley

Ensure that families and individuals in the Greater Lehigh Valley are able to access health and human services resources when and where they need them.

PA 211 is a vital service in the Greater Lehigh Valley. Clients call 2-1-1 to access free and confidential crisis and emergency counseling, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance assistance, stable housing and utilities payment assistance, employment services, veteran services and childcare and family services. PA 211 makes the social services ecosystem/network more efficient by ensuring people in need are connected to agencies that can help them.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Funding PA 211 to support access to resources
- Leveraging PA 211's community data to help our region address social determinants of health and build resource coordination platforms
- Providing data for workforce development and health and human service planning at the regional level



COMMUNITY STABILITY

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MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Institutions in the Lehigh Valley are aware of the impact of trauma and have implemented policies and practices to enable healing, prevention and resiliency.

According to estimates from a recent Department of Health study, half of all Pennsylvanians have had at least one Adverse Childhood Experience. Over 19% have experienced three or more. In addition, 38% of all Pennsylvanians have experienced either emotional or physical abuse as a child. Research shows that childhood trauma can have lasting negative effects on brain development, physical and behavioral health unless buffered by positive and protective factors, like a safe and supportive adult relationship and trauma-informed care and systems. The solution is to build resilient people, resilient neighborhoods and resilient service systems.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, practices and resources throughout the education, health, human services and criminal justice systems
- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, practices and resources in Community Schools, including a statewide expansion of the Handle With Care program, a model of enhanced police-school communications to better support students exposed to traumatic events

796 STUDENTS

supported through **Handle With Care** communication between law enforcement and schools (up 18% from the previous year)

OVER 1,174 PEOPLE

reached through **trauma-informed training**, workshops and community outreach in the past year