

METRO UNITED WAY: Transforming Communities

**BY ADRIA JOHNSON, PRESIDENT & CEO,
METRO UNITED WAY**

One in five children in Kentucky are growing up in poverty without the stability and resources they deserve. Kentucky ranks 40th in the nation for child well-being. This is not good enough, and it certainly doesn't reflect the future we want for our community.

At Metro United Way, we're committed to changing this and ensuring no one in the Greater Louisville region becomes just another statistic. But we can't do it alone. We need your help.

Louisville ranks fifth nationwide for the highest percentage of residents living in poverty. In fact, 1 in 5 families in our seven-county region struggle to make ends meet, and 9.5% of them are food insecure. African Americans face a 26% poverty rate - nearly three times higher than the 10% rate for white residents.

Families struggle to break free from the crushing cycles of poverty. Historical inequalities, socioeconomic disparities, and lack of awareness hinder progress toward equitable outcomes that promote longevity, well-being, and safety.

Metro United Way's approach is not just about providing temporary relief but about finding long-term, sustainable solutions that tackle the root causes of inequity. These challenges don't define us; rather, they are an opportunity for us to come together and make a change.

Today, more than ever, we are focused on maximizing our impact to support thriving kids, strong households, and an equitable community. Solutions are within reach, and with your support, we can create a future - focused on equity and dignity for all - where everyone has a seat at the table.

Here are a few staggering statistics that underscore the challenges we face and the need for immediate action:

- Indiana ranks 24th in the nation for child well-being with 16% of children living in poverty.
- In Kentucky, only 44% of children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- In Indiana, 67% of fourth graders are not proficient in reading.

In 2024, 817 children participated in our developmental screening hub, which equips families with resources, provides referrals, and distributes books and activities. Additionally, we advocated for historic state investment in child care infrastructure in Kentucky, which was passed through House Bill 6. These efforts help children start school ready to succeed, paving the way for greater opportunities later in life.

But addressing the needs of families doesn't stop with children. Metro United Way is strengthening households by providing families with the resources they need to achieve financial stability. Through initiatives like FundBLACKFounders, Southern Indiana Housing Initiative, 2-1-1, and workforce financial coaching, we are



helping families gain the skills, resources, and support to overcome the challenges surrounding access to basic needs.

This past year alone, 249 people have received workforce coaching, and 49 households saw an average increase of \$9,100 in their annual income. In Southern Indiana, 36 households were guided through the homeownership process. And our 2-1-1 helpline connected 21,896 people to resources in our community. These programs, and others, equip families to build a foundation for long-term success.

We accomplished so much in 2024 powered by the commitment and passion of our community, partners, volunteers, donors, and advocates. Together, in 2025 and beyond, we can build a future where every child has the resources they need to succeed, where families are equipped to break cycles of poverty, and where every member of our community is empowered to thrive.

Now is the time to lean in, and we hope you will join us to continue transforming our communities. Visit us at metrounitedway.org to learn more about our work and how to get involved.



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