

Impact Plan



Our Goal:

95% graduation rate in Yellowstone County by 2025

Stabilize Seniors

Our Goal

Low Income seniors stay in their homes.



United Way
of Yellowstone County

Impact Goal 1

All children in Yellowstone County graduate from high school and are ready to enter the workforce or transition to college or advanced training.

Outcomes

The impact goal will be measured by the following outcomes: By 2025

- Ninety-five percent of Billings students will graduate on time from high school with their cohort
- We will close the graduation achievement gap for economically disadvantaged and American Indian youth.

Rationale

Billings, MT has the lowest graduation rate of all AA districts in Montana (2015).

| | |
|--|---|
| 82.1% of the class of 2015 graduated with their class on time. | Only 56.6% of American Indian students in the class of 2015 graduated on time with their peers. |
| 208 students who started school in 9 th grade with the 2015 cohort dropped out before 12 th grade. | Only 70.7% of economically disadvantaged youth in the class of 2015 graduated on time with their peers. |

United Way of Yellowstone County has worked to alleviate the symptoms of poverty since its inception and will continue to do so; however the most promising approach to alleviating poverty *once and for all*, is to ensure that all youth graduate from high school prepared to succeed in work and life.

- Dropouts stand to earn, on average, \$700,000 less over their lifetimes compared to their peers who graduate¹.
- People who drop out of high school are four times more likely to be unemployed, five times more likely to become incarcerated, and six times more likely to become teen parents.

Of all the High Schools in Yellowstone County, students attending Billings High Schools account for 80% of enrolled seniors as well as 80% of all graduates. Additionally, School District 2 has the lowest cohort graduation rate of all districts in Yellowstone County. In the 2014-2015 school year, there were 1191 seniors enrolled in Billings High Schools. Laurel had the next highest enrollment numbers, with 154 enrolled seniors. All of the remaining High Schools in Yellowstone County had less than 75 seniors enrolled. Though the cohort graduation rates in non-Billings High Schools are typically higher, the small number of enrolled seniors skews the drop-out and graduation rates at those schools as well as the county wide graduation rate. For Yellowstone County the average graduation rate for the 2014-2015 school year was 90.5%, but when that rate is weighted based on the number of enrolled seniors, it drops to 83.8% (accounting for the comparatively large number of enrolled seniors at Billings High Schools).

¹ Tyler & Lofstrom, "Finishing High School: Alternative Pathways and Dropout Recovery," www.TheFutureofChildren.org, Princeton University

Impact Strategies

In order to improve graduation rates UWYC will focus on three strategies: school readiness, school success, and crisis stabilization.

Rationale

Students who drop out of high school in our community have patterns of chronic absenteeism and academic failure which have started long before high school. The UWYC Impact Strategies take into account that a dropout is *more than twelve years in the making* and is focused on challenges that can be best addressed with a community wide approach through partnerships with schools and other community partners.

According to national and local research, the causes of early absenteeism and academic failure (which compound over time) have a great deal to do with factors such as the quality of parent/child relationships, adverse childhood experiences, and lack of hope. These factors along with basic needs crises such as unstable housing, hunger, and unreliable transportation create barriers to regular school attendance and academic success.

School Readiness. The first phase of dropout prevention must focus on children prenatally until they enter kindergarten. This is a critical period of cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development for children. Investing in this period of time is essential to ensuring that children do not begin Kindergarten already behind their peers, setting them on a trajectory for increasing disengagement with schools and compounding academic challenges which can lead to academic failure and drop out later on.

According to the Grade Level Reading Campaign²:

- By age 2 low income children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy.
- By age 3 low income children have heard as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.
- As early as age 3 a child's vocabulary can predict third grade reading achievement.
- By age 5 a typical middle-class child recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, compared to 9 for a child from a low-income family.

School Success. The second phase of dropout prevention must wrap supports around students from the moment they enter kindergarten until they graduate. It is essential during this period of time that we do everything we can to ensure that all children **attend school regularly, read on grade level by third grade, transition well into middle school and high school, and succeed academically in high school.**

The first priority is to ensure that children read on grade level by third grade.

- Students who do not read at grade level by 3rd grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than students who do read at grade level³.

² Downloaded Sep 22, 2014 from <http://gradelevelreading.net/our-work/school-readiness>.

- Students who don't read at grade level by 3rd grade AND live in poverty are 13 TIMES more likely to drop out of high school than students from middle income families who do read at grade level⁴.

Poor school attendance correlates strongly to academic failure and drop out, therefore focusing on attendance is essential to ensuring academic success. A focus on the early grades sets patterns for the years to come.

- The majority of youth who drop out of Billings high schools have been absent for one third or more of the school year. . That is one and a half or more days a week, or about one week or more every month⁵.
- For almost one third (29%) of dropouts, attendance difficulty was the main reason they dropped out⁶.
- Only one-fifth of students who are chronically absent in Kindergarten and First Grade will read on grade level in third grade⁷.
- By sixth grade we know that chronic absenteeism is predictive of drop out. forty to fifty-five percent of children who are chronically absent in 6th grade⁸ will not make it through High School
- Students who miss 2 or more days of school in the first month of school are significantly more likely to be chronically absent by the end of the year⁹.
- Low income children are 4 times more likely to be chronically absent than their middle income peers¹⁰. Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports that ensure a child is more likely to get to school. They often face, unstable housing, limited access to healthcare, poor transportation, inadequate food and clothing

Finally, research is also clear that student transitions from elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school are frequently characterized by negative emotions. Thus, effort to engage students in positive transition strategies is essential.

- As students get older and particularly as they transition to a high school, and academic decisions are influenced by student autonomy, "students feel that they are less able academically and their attitudes toward learning and school become increasingly negative...and the changing nature of the school environment has a significant negative effect."¹¹
- In schools in which transition programs are fully operational, researchers saw a dropout rate of 8%, while schools without transition programs averaged 24%.¹²

Crisis Stabilization. The third strategy to prevent school drop-out is crisis stabilization for families. UWYC will invest in strategies to reduce food, housing, and transportation insecurity for families. Research makes it

³Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Early Warning: Why Reading by the Third Grade Matters."

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Double Jeopardy: how Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation."

⁵ School District 2 records for students who dropped out in the 2010/2011 school year.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cecelia Leong – Attendance Works Keynote Presentation_GMM July 2015

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Eccles, Midgley, and Adler, "Grade Related Changes in the School Environment: Effects of Achievement Motivation." JAI Press. 1984.

¹² Reents, Jennifer Newton, "Isolating 9th Graders: Separate Schools Ease the Academic and Social Transition for High-School Bound Students. <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=10402>. Accessed 2/24/16.

clear that unless basic needs are met, the ability of parents and children to focus on anything else is greatly compromised.

Impact CONTEXT

The UWYC strategies for school readiness, school success, and crisis stabilization must be embedded in the contexts of family engagement, trauma-informed care, tiered interventions, non-school interventions, and the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

Family Engagement

Based on a study of 1,085 U.S. parenting adults of 3 to 13 year olds, ***Don't Forget the Families*** makes the case that strengthening family relationships is a critical but undervalued strategy for helping children learn and grow up successfully. This study demonstrated that the quality of parent-child relationships is **10 times** more powerful than demographics (race, ethnicity, family composition, and family income) in predicting whether children are developing critical character strengths they need for success in school and life. These strengths include being motivated to learn, being responsible, and caring for others¹³. This research aligns with other research on the protective nature of family bonding¹⁴.

Therefore UWYC will fund school readiness, school success, and crisis stabilization activities which are attentive to the critical importance of family engagement and family empowerment.

Trauma Informed Care

“The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is a decade-long and ongoing study designed to examine the childhood origins of many of our Nation’s leading health and social problems. The Study represents collaboration between the Nation’s leading prevention agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kaiser Health Plan’s Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego, CA. The key concept underlying the Study is that stressful or traumatic childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, or growing up with alcohol or other substance abuse, mental illness, parental discord, or crime in the home (which we termed adverse childhood experiences—or ACEs) are a common pathway to social, emotional, and cognitive impairments that lead to increased risk of unhealthy behaviors, risk of violence or re-victimization, disease, disability and premature mortality. We now know from breakthroughs in neurobiology that ACEs disrupt neurodevelopment and can have lasting effects on brain structure and function—the biologic pathways that likely explain the strength of the findings from the ACE Study.¹⁵”

¹³ **Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed**, Kent Pekel, Ed.D., Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Ph.D., Amy K. Syvertsen, Ph.D., and Peter C. Scales, Ph.D. <http://www.search-institute.org/downloadable/SearchInstitute-DontForgetFamilies-Report-10-13-2015.pdf>

¹⁴ Hawkins & Catalano, “Measuring Risk and Protective Factors for Use, Delinquency and Other Adolescent Problem Behaviors.” <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.621.2423&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

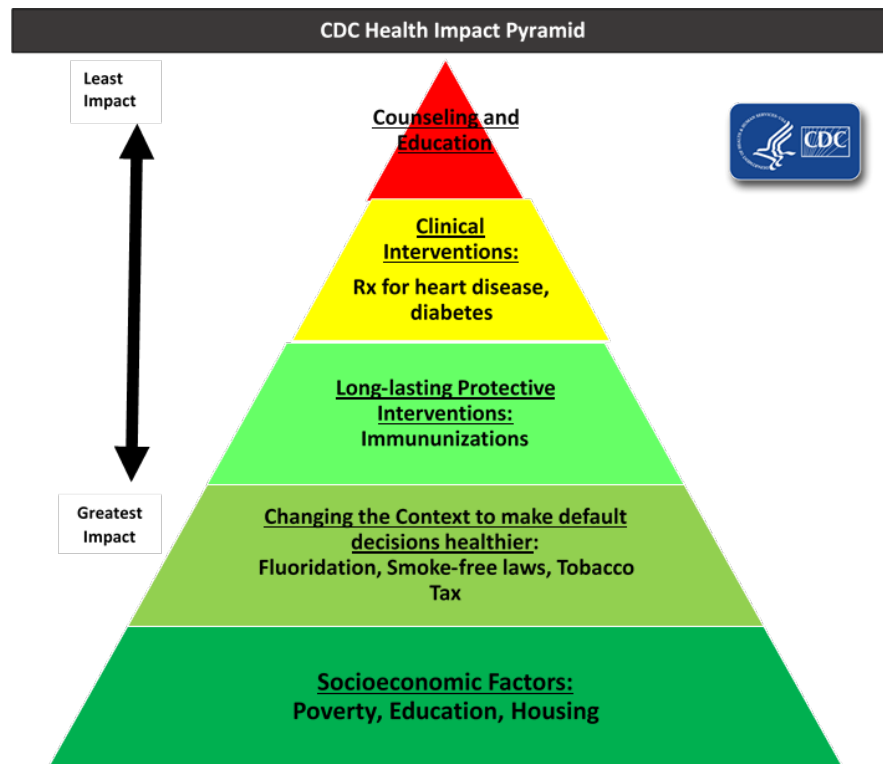
¹⁵ The Health and Social Impact of Growing Up With Adverse Childhood Experiences The Human and Economic Costs of the Status Quo Robert Anda, MD, MS Co-Principal Investigator Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. http://acestudy.org/files/Review_of_ACE_Study_with_references_summary_table_2_.pdf

Current statistics indicate that 78% of Yellowstone County respondents have an ACE score of 1 or more, and 32% have an ACE score of 4 or more.¹⁶ Montana has one of the highest incidences of ACEs in the country. Many of the children who are missing school and struggling academically have already or are currently having an adverse childhood experience, and they are living in families where parents, grandparents, and other loved ones have untreated trauma from their own childhood. It is imperative that UWYC efforts to improve school readiness, school success, and crisis stabilization, take into account the role of trauma in interrupting neurological development, and impacting family stability. Therefore UWYC will fund programs that operate from a trauma-informed capacity or are willing to become trauma informed.

Tiered Interventions

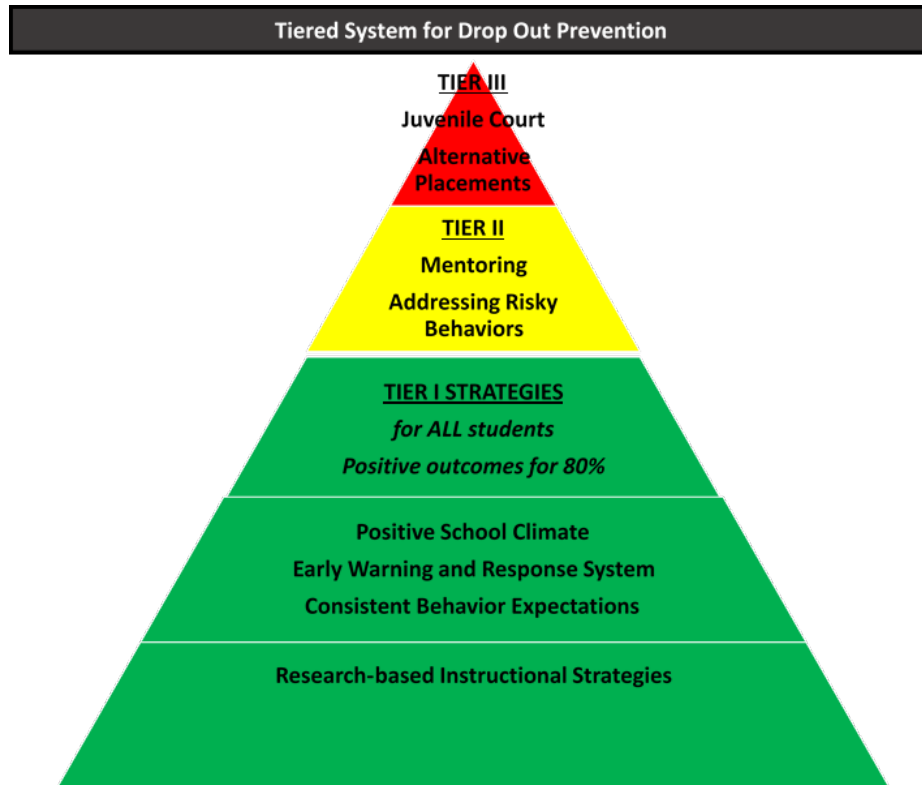
The field of public health provides a tiered model for disease prevention, intervention, and treatment (Graph A). This model depends on environmental strategies such as access to clean water, iodized salt, and access to immunizations to prevent many diseases. This model has been adapted to many social problems including the problems of drop-out and substance abuse prevention. Drop-out prevention research substantiates that good Tier 1 systems (universal strategies which apply to all) can prevent many youth from ever needing a Tier 2 intervention (strategies for youth with identified risk factors). Good Tier 2 strategies prevent youth from needing Tier 3 strategies (strategies for youth with identified problem behaviors). The reality is that Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are much more costly than Tier 1 interventions, and typically foundations, government, and the nonprofit sector spend a majority of energy addressing crisis in Tier 2 or Tier 3. To be effective in actually preventing dropout, UWYC must invest in Tier 1 strategies in addition to Tier 2 and Tier 3, and UWYC should ensure that where Tier 1 strategies are possible, they are an integrated, thoughtful part of the solution.

Graph A



¹⁶ Center for Children and Families, <http://www.elevatemontana.org/find-my-ace-score/>. Accessed 2/23/16.

Graph B



Non-School Interventions and Cross-Sector Collaboration

The strength of UWYC is its capacity to support the non-profit sector in their efforts to alleviate poverty and human suffering. While school success and drop-out prevention are most often viewed as school issues, it is the role of UWYC to address the non-school factors which impact student success. There are 8,760 hours in a year. During this time, youth spend 1,200 hours in school; 2,355 ideally with family; 3,285 hours asleep; and that leaves 1,920 hours unaccounted for. This 1,920 hours is time that youth may be spending at an after-school program, if the program is available to them. Clearly, the balance of time in a child’s life is not spent in school (even for school-age children). In addition, many protective factors are in place when a child is in school, including shelter, food, and caring, consistent adults.

The UWYC work to ensure that all students graduate from high school should focus on solutions which address non-school domains of a child’s life, including family, peers, neighborhood, out of school time programs, and child care settings. These are the factors which Billings School personnel most often cite as out of their control but yet very impactful on a child’s ability to attend school regularly and to achieve academic success. The focus on non-school solutions does not mean that partnerships with schools are not an essential UWYC focus. It simply means that UWYC efforts to promote school success should not duplicate what schools already do well; rather UWYC efforts should focus in the traditional strength areas of UWYC including promoting resilience, safety, and stability in non-school settings; using volunteers to build service

capacity in schools and in the community; and connecting the continuum of care so that nonprofit and volunteer resources can be efficiently accessed by schools and vice versa.

Impact ACTIVITIES

UWYC will focus on activities that are:

- Proven through research to promote school readiness, school success, and crisis stabilization.
- Identified as needed and wanted through community assessment and partnerships.

| Strategies | Activities | Outcomes |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| School Readiness (0-PK) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent support (for example: access to a home visiting program, parenting classes, respite care)¹⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased parent/child bonding • Increased parenting skills and or knowledge • Increased social/emotional health for parent or child • Referrals to resources • Increased access to quality affordable childcare • Permanency for children |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children meet or make progress toward developmentally appropriate social/emotional benchmarks • Children meet or make progress toward developmentally appropriate cognitive benchmarks • Children meet or make progress toward developmentally appropriate physical benchmarks • Increased parental knowledge about kindergarten readiness • Increased parental skills with regard to preparing children for kindergarten • Increased early literacy skills |
| School Success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent support (for example: access to a home visiting program, parenting classes, respite care)¹⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased parent/child bonding • Increased parenting skills and or knowledge • Increased social/emotional health for parent or child • Referrals to resources • Increased access to quality affordable childcare • Increase in # of developmental assets¹⁹ for child • Permanency for children |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring for children/youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities to connect with caring adult • Increase in # of developmental assets for child • Increased # of children who have identified their “spark”²⁰ |

¹⁷ According to “Don’t Forget The Families,” SEARCH Institute Study of 1,085 parenting adults of 3-13 year olds: “The quality of parent-child relationships is **10 times** more powerful than demographics (race, ethnicity, family composition, and family income) in predicting whether children are developing critical character strengths they need for success in school and life. These strengths include being motivated to learn, being responsible, and caring for others.”

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¹⁹ Developmental assets will be measured using the SEARCH Institute model of developmental assets.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring for students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read on grade level or are progressing to reading on grade level. Students perform math on grade level or are progressing to performing math on grade level. Students complete homework assignments. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities to ignite “spark” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased exposure to potential areas of spark such as: hobbies, cultural activities, sports, music, art, engineering... Increased # of children who have identified their “spark.” Increased skills and/or knowledge with regard to an area of “spark” Increased social/emotional growth |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote attendance in school and out-of-school time programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students achieve meaningful attendance targets in school or out of school time programs. Barriers to attendance are addressed. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote positive transitions from elementary to middle school and/or middle school to high school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased bonding between student and school. Student engagement in out of school time activities. Student reports having friends at school. Decrease core course failure. Students achieve meaningful attendance targets in school. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement early warning and response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in child behavioral incidents Increased ability to systemically identify and address needs |
| Crisis Stabilization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Assistance Utility Assistance Food Assistance Transportation Assistance Child Abuse & Neglect Mitigation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the # of children/families receiving housing assistance. Increase the # of children/families receiving utility assistance. Improved coordination of food assistance for families. Improved access to healthy food for children/families. Increase the # of children/families receiving transportation assistance. |

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|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational capacity building to increase family engagement, trauma-informed service delivery, and tiered interventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased family engagement with organizational planning, evaluation feedback. Quality of staff/client relationships Increased staff skills and/or knowledge regarding the impact of trauma on clients and client behavior Increased ability to serve clients with a history of trauma. |
|---|--|--|

²⁰ Sparks refers to the intrinsic interests, talents, and passions that young people have that motivate them to learn, grow, and contribute. Search Institute has engaged in extensive research on why some young people thrive, while others just “get by”. Many factors play a role, but a key dimension is what they call “Sparks.” “Sparks” is a metaphor that describes a key feature of young people’s motivation and thriving.

Impact Goal 2

Vulnerable seniors have access to food and other supports to keep them in their homes, preventing the need for higher levels of care.

Outcomes

The impact goal will be measured by the following outcomes:

- # of seniors receiving food assistance to stay in their homes
- # of seniors receiving other supports to stay in their homes
- By 2030 increase the # of high school graduates prepared for work and life, to better meet the financial burden created by increased dependency ratios²¹

Rationale

Yellowstone County has 1928 Senior Citizens in poverty²². This population is projected to increase at a much faster rate than the population of individuals in the workforce over the next fifteen years.

Impact Strategies

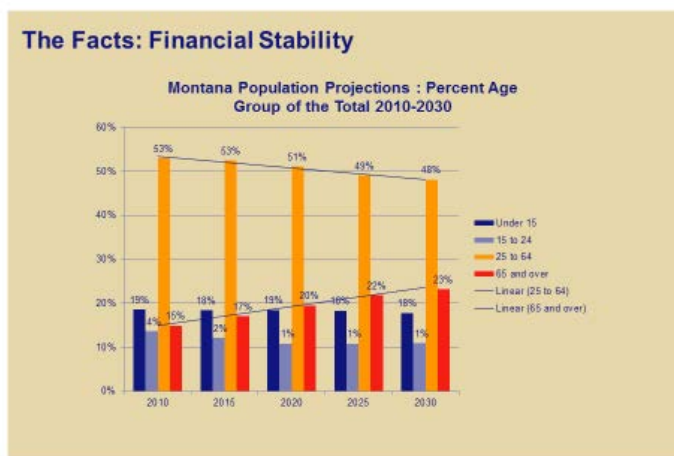
**Supports to Low Income Seniors for Housing Stabilization.
School Readiness, School Success, and Crisis Stabilization.**

Rationale

In line with UWYC historical investments in this arena, UWYC will continue to focus on activities that keep seniors in their homes. It is less costly to provide low income senior citizens with supports that enable them to stay in their homes, than for these senior citizens to have to access expensive care such as a nursing home.

In keeping with UWYC new impact agenda to work on root causes of poverty; UWYC believes that the problems with senior poverty will continue to be exacerbated unless we can focus on getting young people out of poverty:

- The senior population in Billings is growing faster than the population of working age individuals.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the dependency ratio is projected to climb rapidly from 22 in 2010 to 35 in 2030.
- This means that by 2030 Yellowstone County will have fewer individuals in the workforce to support more senior citizens.



40 August 4, 2015



²¹ The # of people 65 and older to every 100 people of traditional working ages.

²² American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5 Year Estimates

Therefore the strategies to address senior housing instability focus on two things: 1) Alleviating the symptoms of poverty today and keeping seniors in their homes; 2) Increasing graduation rates in Yellowstone County (see Impact Goal 1).

Impact ACTIVITIES

UWYC will focus on activities that are:

- Proven through research to promote senior stability.
- Identified as needed and wanted through community assessment and partnerships.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Activities</u> | <u>Outcomes</u> |
|---|---|--|
| Supports to keep seniors in their homes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of meals/food boxes provided to seniors |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health/hygiene support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of seniors accessing health/hygiene supports |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of elder abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of seniors using Payee Services • # of elder abuse educational events |
| Increase workforce to mitigate increased dependency ratio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Goal 1 | |