

# STATE OF THE CHILD IN CHEMUNG COUNTY

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Prepared by the Every Child Matters Coalition



OCTOBER 2012

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Dear Reader,

The every child matters Coalition was formed by a group of concerned citizens in June 2004 to support two main goals: To educate the community and community leaders on the issues affecting all children and families and to advocate for public policies and institutional practices that address the vital needs of children and families, especially poor and low income children.

Regardless of your political affiliation, place of residence, socio-economic status or other social factor, you and your family are affected by what happens to all children living within our community.

The enclosed information is designed to begin dialogues and conceptualize the impact that many key issues have on our families and our communities.

Please feel free to contact us for additional information or to find out how you can be involved. We can be reached at: [everychildmatterschemung@yahoo.com](mailto:everychildmatterschemung@yahoo.com)

Thank you for your interest and commitment to the children and families in Chemung County.

Sincerely,

The Every Child Matters Coalition of Chemung County

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**CHILDREN:  
OUR FUTURE  
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## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

*By: Ruth A. Harvey –Chemung County Child Care Council, Inc.*

Child Care is a basic need for Chemung County families in obtaining and retaining employment. Securing quality programs at an affordable price for low income families, especially those not eligible for subsidies, is very difficult. Low salaries and lack of health insurance continues to be a barrier to people entering the field of Early Care and Education.

### **CURRENT PRIORITIES**

- Recruiting and retaining a well trained Early Care and Education Workforce
- Accessibility and affordability of care for working families
- Making children a priority by ensuring that only high quality child care programs can offer services

### ***Child Care Subsidies:***

The Child Care Subsidy Program assists families with the cost of their child care who are: income eligible (NYS allows for this to be 200% above poverty or gross earnings up to \$44,700 for a family of 4) working families, parents involved with Children and Family services, and TANF parents who are working or attending an approved training program. Due to lack of funding Chemung County has not been in a position to provide this service to families at the 200% above poverty for several years.

The program was reduced mid-year by 250 children due to lack of available funding. This has caused concern in many areas including :

- Reduction or loss of employment for parents
- Unstable, inconsistent care environments for children (which is the opposite of what we are trying to accomplish in the Council's work and the work of the School Readiness Project)
- Direct negative impact on the Child Care Industry in Chemung County

The numbers in this year's report reflect this impact as all numbers have been decreased. This is a trend that we hope does not continue and we will be working diligently to turn this problem around.

### **TOTAL SUBSIDY CASELOAD:**

	As of 6/30/11	As of 6/30/12	<b>DIFFERENCE</b>
<b>Families</b>	690	468	<b>(-222)</b>
<b>Children</b>	1177	902	<b>(-275)</b>

**Children Needing Care:**

Age of Child	# of children needing care 7/1/10 through 6/30/11	# of children needing care 7/1/11 through 6/30/12	DIFFERENCE
0-11 months	254	213	<b>(-41)</b>
12-23 months	125	102	<b>(-23)</b>
24-35 months	93	76	<b>(-17)</b>
3 &4 year olds	115	105	<b>(-10)</b>
5 year olds	47	46	<b>(-1)</b>
6- 12 years	108	80	<b>(-28)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>(-120)</b>

**Child Care Slots:**

	As of 6/30/11	As of 6/30/12	DIFFERENCE
Ages 6 weeks - 12 years	2629	2483	<b>(-146)</b>

**Professional Development:**

202 Early Childhood Professionals received training to improve their knowledge and skills.

**NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS...**

- Chemung County participated in the QualitystarsNY Field Test in 2010. 5 Family Day Care Providers and 3 Child Care Centers took part in this intensive process. The 5 Family Day Care Providers are now in the "pilot" process for full implementation. Full implantation across the state is expected in 2014.
- Programs serving 4 year olds will participated in the ELLCO literacy assessment in the 2011-12 year. These same programs will participate in the CLASS assessment in the 2012-13 year.
- SUNY Albany completed the final evaluation of the first five years of the School Readiness Project. There were significant strides in the number of children ready for Kindergarten in Chemung County.
- NYS has implemented a Time and Attendance on-line program for the child care subsidy program.

\*\* Source: Chemung County Child Care Council







## HEALTH

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***By: Dr. Ralph Moore – Retired Pediatrician***

This year's State of the Child Health Report reviews and updates information reported in the 2011 book.

Pediatrician's comments suggest that:

### Obesity

Obesity continues to be a major problem in New York State, ranking 42<sup>nd</sup> among other states in terms of obesity. More than half of New Yorkers will be obese in 2030 if the current trend continues.

Obesity is generally caused by an unhealthy diet and a lack of physical activity. Many other factors, such as genetic and socio-economic, have an influence on this problem.

A recent study showed that overweight teens typically eat less than normal weight peers. The reason for this observation appears to be that the overweight teens are less active than their normal weight peers. The management of this problem is to encourage more activity as well as a lower caloric diet.

Another study in the journal Pediatrics showed a strong association between healthier weight and tough state laws regulating food in snack bars and vending machines.

In New York State the Department of Health is presenting a first-ever NYS Strategy Plan for Overweight and Obese Prevention. Also

there are reports that anti-obesity bills are soon to be presented to the New York State legislature.

Recommendations for obesity prevention:

- Eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day.
- Get one hour of physical activity a day.
- Limit screen time to less than 2 hours a day.
- Limit consumption of sugar flavored beverages.
- Eat breakfast daily.
- Switch to low fat dairy products.
- Regularly eat family meals together.
- Limit fast food take out and eating out.

The Chemung County Health Department has information about local weight control programs.

### Immunization

Childhood immunization continues to be the most effective public health endeavor that exists. The current recommended immunization schedule for children from birth to 18 years calls for vaccination against 16 different infections.



### Influenza

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents to have all children ages 6 months and older immunized against influenza every year. Influenza is a potentially serious infection for everyone,

especially younger children and children with asthma, diabetes, suppressed immune systems, and neurologic disease. Annual immunization is recommended because the virus strains that cause infection change from year to year. 2 of the 3 strains used this year for immunization are different from last year's strains.

It is suggested that anyone that regularly cares for a child – a parent or daycare provider - should be immunized.

The Chemung County Health Department can provide immunizations, but no longer provide free immunizations to children covered by private insurance due to a change in federal policy

#### Pertussis

There has been a gradual increase in the incidence of pertussis (whooping cough) which is attributed to the current use of acellular pertussis vaccine in place of whole cell pertussis vaccine. Vaccine studies show that the risk of pertussis rose 42% per year following completion of the acellular vaccine series. A more effective pertussis vaccine that provides long lasting immunity is needed, but in the meantime, the CDC recommends pertussis boosters beginning at age 11 years. Parents who have questions about the pertussis protection of their children should consult their children's doctor.

#### Lead Poisoning Prevention

Lead is a poisonous metal found in paint used on the inside and outside of many homes built before 1978. Constant exposure to lead from this paint results in lead poisoning which can cause

learning, hearing, and behavioral problems as well as damage to the brain and kidneys. If caught early these effects of lead poisoning can be prevented.

The management of lead poisoning consists of educating the public about the problem with Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs and doing blood lead screening tests on children to detect, monitor, and treat children with elevated blood lead levels. Home environmental investigations are done when lead levels are high and hospitalizations are ordered if medical treatment is indicated.

In Chemung County three locations, Southern Tier Pediatrics, Orchard Family Health Care, and Chemung County Health Department have offered blood lead screening since 2009 resulting in the screening of between 1800 and 2500 children a year.

At the same time that the blood lead screening has been ongoing, the Chemung County Lead Poisoning Prevention Project has lost most of its funding and is now only able to work about two hours a week on prevention.

Recently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cut in half the amount of blood lead that should lead to medical monitoring. This will result in many more children being at risk of lead poisoning. At the same time, Congress cut its budget for lead poisoning prevention programs by 94%. Chemung County won't be impacted since its funding had already been cut.

It is concerning that as the CDC raised its concern about lead poisoning, Congress significantly cut its budget for prevention.

### Oral Health

Dental caries (tooth decay) is the most common disease of children. More than 40% of children from families living in poverty have dental caries by the time they reach kindergarten.

Tooth decay causes pain and infection which may lead to difficulty eating, speaking, and sleeping as well as overall poor health. A recent study in Los Angeles showed that children with recent tooth pain were more likely to have lower grade averages than children without pain.

For the last four years the Chemung County Health Department has provided a dental sealant program for county children in grades 2 through 5. The program consists of a dental hygienist examining children for tooth decay, referring those with decay to a dentist for treatment, and applying a dental sealant to healthy teeth to prevent decay. Parents need to give permission for children to be examined and take part in the program.



This year the program was offered to children attending Beecher, Diven, Fassett, Broadway, and Riverside schools – a total of 1209 children. Only 27% of these children were examined and of these 41% had tooth decay. A sealant was applied to the healthy teeth of 80 % of the children

The statistics for the last three years of the program show that only 24% of eligible children were screened for dental caries and of these children 37% had caries. 74% of the children had protective sealant applied.

It is concerning that a common condition, dental caries, which can cause pain and be associated with poor school attendance and performance, goes undetected in Chemung County - this despite there being a free program that can identify, treat, and prevent the condition.



## HOUSING

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**By: Tom Dubel – Neighborhood Legal Services**

### Why Housing Matters to Kids:

Shelter has traditionally been considered an essential element of human survival. Decent housing is critical to the well-being of our children as it has a direct impact on their health, safety and stability. It provides the physical basis for a good home environment. Good housing helps to create economic opportunities and thriving communities. Studies have shown that adequate and affordable housing has positive effects on the physical and mental health and educational achievement of children.

### **Affordability:**

A key aspect of the availability of decent housing for many in our community is whether it is affordable. The generally accepted standard of affordability is that housing costs should not exceed 30% of income. Census data for 2000 showed that 41% of tenant households in Chemung County spent 30% or more of household income on rent and that number is growing. By 2010 the Census Bureau calculated that 48% of renters, 25% of owners with a mortgage and 8% of owners without a mortgage exceeded this standard. Almost half of all tenants and many homeowners in our community cannot afford a decent home and are currently facing housing costs that are not economically sustainable.

The HUD local fair market rent for a two bedroom apartment in 2012 is \$769/month. To afford this rent a minimum wage worker would need to work 82 hours every week. Due to this

affordability gap more families are forced to choose between providing a decent home or putting food on the table for their children.

### **Homelessness Prevention and Emergency Shelter:**

The lack of affordable housing for all those in need inevitably places the most vulnerable members of our community at-risk of homelessness. For poor persons facing the legal threat of eviction, loss of utilities or other issues putting their homes in jeopardy Legal Assistance of Western New York provides free legal representation. In 2011 Legal Services handled housing cases that benefitted 732 persons including 306 children. Another 446 people including 140 children benefitted from legal advocacy to obtain benefits that could help to cover costs to keep families in their homes.

When preventive efforts are unable to assist all who are in need our community is faced with a growing number of neighbors who have lost their homes. The number of homeless persons served in recent years has increased from 409 in 2008, to 533 in 2009 and up to 663 in 2010 according to the HMIS Homeless Data Report for Chemung County issued on 7/22/11. Of the 663 homeless persons served by Transitional and Emergency Shelter Programs 31% were in families and 18% were children.

### **Good News:**

Locally the Catholic Charities First Time Homebuyers Program has over the past 17 years given 410 low and moderate income families with 521 children the means to purchase their own home. The program is sponsored by the City of Elmira which

provides funds from federal sources to help with down payment and closing costs. It has become a major means for new homeowners to move into the urban core of our community creating a source of investment in the city and a stabilizing factor for residential neighborhoods.

Late in 2008 Catholic Charities and Legal Services formed a collaboration to offer comprehensive financial counseling and legal services to homeowners facing mortgage default or foreclosure. By March, 2011 the serious delinquency rate for Elmira increased by 1.1% to 9.4 %, the fifth largest increase in the nation. To date this local response to the national home credit and foreclosure crisis has provided services to 275 families including 362 children who were at risk of losing their home. New resources received in October, 2012 from the NYS Attorney General's Home Ownership Protection Program will allow this critical work to continue.

## **Impact of the Gas Industry**

The expansion of the gas industry in Chemung County and nearby parts of Pennsylvania has the potential to become a major economic force in our community and its impact on housing issues is still unfolding. Since gas drilling is a classic exploitative industry we can expect a typical boom and bust economic cycle with the boom coming on very quickly. So the statistical data used to gauge housing costs and conditions will not be as useful in trying to prepare for a period of rapid change. Some anecdotal information on the industry's impact on local housing is already available especially from nearby communities along the Pennsylvania border. The Elmira Star-Gazette published an article on January 17, 2011 entitled "Gas Drilling Causing Twin Tiers Housing Shortage" stating that the influx of drillers into the area has resulted in a severe

shortage of available and affordable housing especially in the Sayre-Athens-Waverly area. The reporter interviewed several emergency shelter providers. The director of the Tioga Outreach Center is quoted as saying that: "One problem is the lack of housing, and the other thing is landlords are increasing rent knowing they can get more money from people coming in for the gas work that is being done. That's been a huge struggle for us. We've worked with numerous people in this situation. Now they don't have a place to stay." The Captain of the Valley Salvation Army stated: "Gas drillers are living in Elmira and Waverly. They are taking up places that we would normally have had. They are willing to pay more money."

On August 2, 2012 the Star-Gazette reported that the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency will make state funds available for low-income housing projects in the Marcellus Shale region. An influx of drillers "caused rent for some properties to jump from \$800 to \$3,000 a month ... leaving some residents homeless. In an attempt to remedy the problem, the state will dole out \$2.5 million in Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund cash they collected in 2011."

So in Chemung County we can anticipate a similar result with greater demand for housing and consequently increased costs which will drastically curtail affordable options for working class households. Such conditions are likely to lead to greater displacement, more difficulty in relocation and increased risk of homelessness for local children and families. As a community we need to prepare to meet this challenge before it becomes a crisis.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Elmira Star-Gazette and staff of local agencies.

## HUNGER/NUTRITION

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*By: Kathy Dubel - Catholic Charities*

### Food Hardship ~ Food Insecurity

*Food Hardship* rates continued to hold steady during the first six months of 2012 according to the *Gallup* organization - with “far too many Americans reporting that, during the period January to June 2012, they did not have enough money to buy the food their families needed.”

In New York State 17% of households surveyed responded *yes* to the *Gallup* survey question, “have there been times during the past twelve months when you could not afford the food your family needed?”

In 2011, 22% of households with children in the 29<sup>th</sup> (now the 23<sup>rd</sup>) Congressional District (includes Chemung County) reported being *food insecure*. *Food security* is defined as economic and physical access to the basic food needed for a healthy and nutritious diet.

Rising numbers of Chemung County families with children are seeking emergency food assistance from local providers – an indicator of local food hardship/insecurity (see related data on next page). Catholic Charities Samaritan Center, the largest provider of emergency food assistance in the county, reports that emergency food assistance was provided to **1,398**

**children in 717 households during the first six months of 2012.** In contrast, 1,728 children in 874 households received emergency food assistance during the entire twelve month period of 2011.

### DROUGHT AND COST OF FOOD

In 2012, the worst drought since the 1950s has affected nearly 80% of agricultural land in the United States, which may drive up the cost of food in the months ahead. Families may face problems as the drought-related crop damage results in a shortage of inputs in the food supply and begins to affect retail prices. The USDA predicts that consumers could soon notice price increases for beef, pork, poultry and dairy; but, the full effect for packaged and processed foods could take ten to twelve months to appear on supermarket shelves.

Low-income families with children are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in the cost of food. For those with budgets already stretched to their limits, higher food costs mean that they could struggle to afford enough food for themselves and their families in the months ahead.

### The Thrifty Food Plan

The Thrifty Food Plan is the USDA’s estimate of what it costs to purchase a *minimally* adequate diet. It is the least expensive market basket of food the government prices, and recommends only for short-term use. It serves as the

government’s basis for Food Stamp allotments. The cost of the Thrifty Food Plan increased by \$11.80 from July 2011 to July 2012 for a family of four. Based on the minimum wage of \$7.25/hour, it would take 86 hours – more than two weeks – to earn enough to cover the current monthly cost (\$627) of the Thrifty Food Plan for a family of four.

(www.cnpp.usda.gov)

**LOCAL FOOD ASSISTANCE**

Many faith communities and human service agencies in Chemung County partner with the **Food Bank of the Southern Tier** to address food insecurity among families with children:

- Between July 2011-June 2012 Chemung County’s 18 emergency food providers (food pantries, mobile pantry, Community Kitchen) assisted families with **125,386 children under age 18**. This is a 41% increase over last year. 52% of those receiving emergency food in Chemung County are children.
- Food Bank of the Southern Tier provided **1,575,055 pounds** of food to Chemung County’s emergency food programs for distribution directly to families with children and others in need. (www.foodbankst.org)

**SCHOOL LUNCH/BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION**  
**Chemung County school districts (2011-2012)**

([www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov))

District	Enrollment	# Qualified for Free/Reduced Meals*	% of Enrollment
Elmira	6,903	4,310	62%
Elm Hgts	1,070	472	44%
Horseheads	4,385	1,273	29%
S-VE	1,017	526	52%

\* **eligibility means that household income is *under* 185% of federal poverty level (poverty level for family of four = \$23,050)**

## FOOD STAMPS/SNAP

The federal **Food Stamp Program** (now called SNAP - **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**) remains the most effective food safety net for families with children - providing more than ***two million dollars each month*** in purchasing power for Chemung County families who spend these dollars in the local food economy:

- Food Stamp participation rates in Chemung County increased during the past year. Currently 5,350 households with **6,038 children under age 18** are served by SNAP. (Chemung Co. data)

For struggling families, SNAP makes a huge difference in their economic well-being and health. SNAP provides a safety net for Chemung County families with children helping them to afford enough to eat when their incomes are inadequate. Reports from the U.S. Census Bureau and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service show that SNAP benefits *lift people out of poverty*. According to the reports, New York State was among the five states where SNAP made the largest percentage point difference in lifting families *above* 100 % of the poverty level. (USDA FNS)

Despite the effectiveness of SNAP, the United States House of Representatives proposes to slash SNAP funding by \$16 billion over ten years. Some families could be denied food stamps and others could lose up to \$90 a month in benefits. In a

recent poll by the Food Research Action Center, 75% of respondents agreed that cutting food assistance to low-income families is the *wrong way to reduce spending and the deficit*. ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org))



## MENTAL HEALTH

**By: Brian Hart – Chemung County Dept. of Mental Hygiene**

As New York State endeavors to redesign the Medicaid system, they seem to have temporarily set aside three important populations; the developmental disabled, children and youth, those who either have no insurance or are underinsured. While this is perplexing to many, we advocate strongly in Albany for the plight of these individuals.

In Chemung County, much of our focus is on the children's services with an eye on the fact that we cannot simply pursue a status quo environment that often falls short for so many, but the pursuit of alternative mechanisms for meeting these needs. Last year you were told briefly about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funding known as Systems of Care. Historically this has been a grant worth a million dollar a year for six years for any individual county. However, the rules have changed requiring the participation of the entire state to be able to pursue this funding. With that in mind, we remain involved with 11 other counties in pursuing an expansion grant that allows for a slower ramp up of this funding across the state. If successful, with a local focus on youth with emotional issues transitioning from adolescents to adulthood, we believe that we can make a difference. Using the federal government's definition of emotional disturbance opens up many more possibilities as the youth doesn't have to be seriously and emotionally disturbed, as is the case for other similar state funding. To make this a reality, it will take a community's effort, so stay tuned for requests to invite you and

others to the table with an expectation of continued collaborative approaches to addressing the needs of our youth..

Similar such efforts occurred last year with a grass roots effort to address bullying in the schools. The Mental Hygiene Department purchased 1500 copies of *Locker 572* and distributed to BOCES, as well as the Heights, Horseheads and the Elmira City School District. Each district chose their method for distribution including having staff only read this book, or perhaps the most creative was that approach by EFA. Every student and staff member at EFA read a chapter at a time in small groups allowing for open discussion of the issues surrounding bullying and their personal experiences. Then at the end of the book, they tied this all together in a unified approach by all wearing anti-bullying t-shirts on day in which they invited the author to facilitate a discussion about the concepts in the book, and what they can do as next steps.

Other mental health services continue to be provided to the youth of our community including but not limited to clinical services in each of the Elmira City Schools, suicide prevention efforts for youth continue in all school districts including both Signs of Suicide and Sources of Strength as well as our annual walk for suicide prevention the first Saturday in May at Eldridge Park. While all of these services and unique approaches have a sustainability plan, we are dependent on the support of our community through their involvement whenever possible.





## POVERTY

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**By: Bill Brodgerski – Economic Opportunity Program**

*The following are current political & social issues in our community.*

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Poverty is defined as: Any barrier to prosperity. Poverty is a lack of resources and opportunity, feelings of being disenfranchised from various support systems (i.e. educational, economic, cultural and social), and diminished feelings of empowerment to obtain these resources and opportunities. (Source: [www.kjmwebdev.com](http://www.kjmwebdev.com))

**The majority of statistical data was found on the US Census' American FactFinder webpage and is based on the 2011 Community Survey estimates. Poverty statistics used by federal, state and local governments are based on the Health and Human Services Guidelines for families and income.**



2012 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,170
2	15,130
3	19,090
4	23,050
5	27,010
6	30,970
7	34,930
8	38,890
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.	

- ∅ The poverty rate for families in Chemung County is 13.4%.
- ∅ The poverty rate for families with children under 18 is 25.3%, 9.7% for married couples with children under 18, and 55.0% for female households with children under 18. (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages>)

- ∅ The poverty rate for families with children under 5 only is 36.3% for all families, 11.9% for married couples with children under 5 only and 62.4% for female households with children under 5 only. (Source <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

- ∅ The Child Poverty Rate for Chemung County is 22.1% (4,302 children birth . F Ĩ Á ^ ^ æ! • D È Á Á Ç Û [ ~ ! & Married Couples with Children under 18 Being Indicators Clearinghouse)

- ∅ Children and Youth receiving Public Assistance in 2011 is 5.4%. (1,678 children ages birth . 17 years) (Source: S ã à q • Á Y ^ | | Á Ô ^ \* ã } Á Ô | ^ æ! ã } \* @ [ ~

- ∅ For families with children under five, the poverty rate in Chemung County exceeds the state average. In New York State the poverty rate is 12.3%. The poverty rate for families with children under 5 only is 17.7%. The poverty rate for married couples with children under 5 only is 7.6%. The poverty rate for female households with children under 5 only is 40.6%. (Source <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

- ∅ A parent working full-time (40 hours/52 weeks) at minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) earns, before taxes, \$15,080. For a family that consists of one parent and one child, the wages earned exceed the National Poverty Level by only \$370.

- ∅ Chemung County unemployment rate: 9.1% for August 2012 ([www.labor.ny.gov/stats/LSLAUS.shtm](http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/LSLAUS.shtm))
- ∅ Per Capita income in Chemung County is \$23,457 compared to the New York State average of \$30,945 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov.qfd.states.36/36015.html>)
- ∅ Southern Tier unemployment rate: 8.6% for August 2012 (Includes Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties, <http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/laus.asp>)

Poverty Rates	U.S.	NYS	Chemung
All families	11.7%	12.3%	13.4%
Families with children under 18	18.6%	18.9%	25.3%
Married Couples with Children under 18	8.8%	8.8%	9.7%
Female households with children under 18	40.8%	38.7%	55.0%
Families with children under 5 only	19.4%	17.7%	36.3%
Married couples with children under 5 only	7.4%	7.6%	11.9%
Female households with children under 5 only	47.9%	40.6%	62.4%