

A vibrant mural on a wall. The top section shows a river with logs floating down it, with a red-roofed house on the right. Below this, a large red building with many windows sits on a green hill. A blue stream flows through the scene. In the foreground, two women in long dresses and bonnets stand on a dirt path. To the left, a wooden frame contains a scene of a woman in a blue dress operating a mill. The entire scene is painted in a folk-art style with bold colors and visible brushstrokes.

**CHAPTER 7: OUR
ARTS, INSTITUTIONS, &
COMMUNITY SERVICES**



Warren County is home to a variety of assets that contribute to the well-being of residents and the vitality of its communities. From cultural landmarks like the Hyde Collection and Charles R. Wood Theater to essential services provided by Glens Falls Hospital, SUNY Adirondack, emergency responders, and social service organizations, these institutions play a central role in daily life.

Arts and cultural venues inspire creativity and bring people together, while education and healthcare provide foundations for learning, growth, and community health. Emergency and social services ensure residents remain safe and supported. These assets not only enhance quality of life but also strengthen the County's appeal to new residents, families, and businesses.

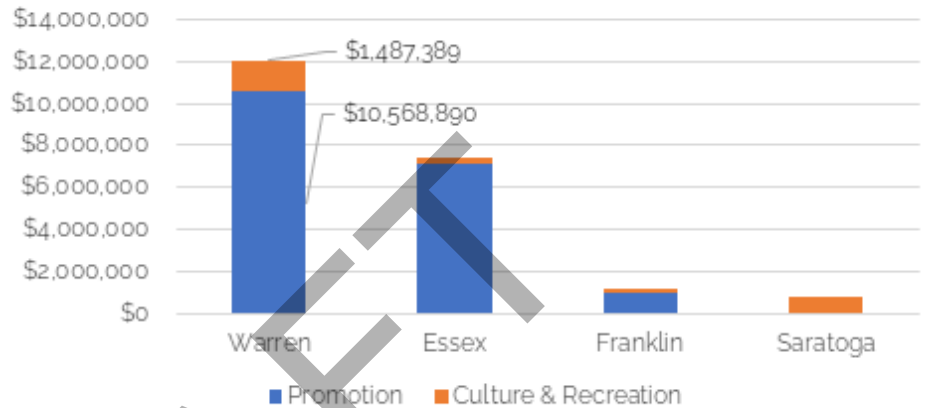
By supporting and investing in these institutions, Warren County can foster vibrant, connected communities while preserving its unique identity and meeting changing demographic needs.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and cultural institutions play a critical role in enhancing local quality of life, as evidenced by the Warren County 2040 survey, where nearly half of respondents identified Arts and Culture as "very important" to their quality of life. These institutions not only enrich the community with vibrant programs and events but also drive economic growth and cultural vitality. At the state level, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that the arts and culture sector contributed \$126.7 billion to New York's economy in 2020, representing 7.3% of the State's GDP, 435,693 jobs, and total compensation of \$53.4 billion.

"Glens Falls has to stop being seen a beneficiary of Saratoga and Lake George Tourism. We have so much to offer in Glens Falls." -Survey Respondent

Peer County Comparison
2023 Promotion and Culture & Recreation Expenditure



Warren County has a thriving arts and culture scene including music, theater, dance, the visual arts, and historical and cultural museums. Glens Falls is a hub of thriving arts community from museums to theaters, and galleries to concert halls, helping to enrich the culture and lives of residents and visitors alike. Within a single square mile, 14 arts and cultural organizations brighten the Glens Falls City scene. Outside of Glens Falls, organizations like the Lake George Arts Project bring arts and music to the waterfront, including one of the oldest-running jazz festivals in the County. Further north, the Adirondack Folk School provides unique programming for all ages, highlighting the history of the County. These are just some of many arts and cultural institutions that bring vibrancy to the County and enhance quality of life.

Warren County's role within arts and culture centers largely around the Tourism Department, the work of the County Historian, and Occupancy Tax distribution. The Tourism Department works to promote and support the tourism industry, especially in the Lake George area, through marketing, collaboration, and communication with regional tourism partners and visitors. The County Tourism and Planning Departments are successful at promoting tourism related to outdoor recreation and drawing people to the Lake George region.

The County Historian's Office works to preserve, interpret, and promote the history of Warren County and serve as the connection between the local municipal town and village historian offices throughout the County. The County through its Occupancy Tax, provides funding for special event and activities. As outlined in the County's Occupancy Tax Local Law, the tax revenue is allocated

"to enhance the general economy of the County of Warren, and its city, towns and villages through the promotion of tourist activities, conventions, trade shows, special events and other directly-related and supported activities." In evaluating projects and events to fund through the County's occupancy tax, an emphasis is placed on how many "beds" the event will generate. While this framing does contribute to continued occupancy tax generation (through additional hotel stays), it unfortunately leaves out the County arts and cultural institutions, whose visitors are more likely day-visitors.

HEALTHCARE, SOCIAL SERVICES, EMERGENCY SERVICES

HEALTHCARE

Quality healthcare is a driving factor behind quality of life, a priority need for an aging population, and an important factor in people's decision on where to live or relocate to. In the recently completed Adirondack Relocation Assessment Survey, respondents were asked to select the top five most important factors when selecting a community or neighborhood to live in: availability of health care services was third most important of fifteen factors with 54% of respondents choosing it as one of their top five factors.

Warren County has one hospital, Glens Falls Hospital. Their main hospital campus is located in the City of Glens Falls along with several specialized medical services that are proximate to the main campus. Glens Falls Hospital has 391 hospital beds, the majority of which are designated medical/surgical beds, resulting in a total hospital beds rate of 609 per 100,000 when considering the total regional population.

Warren County is facing a healthcare workforce shortage and access challenges

As outlined in the 2022-24 Warren County Community Health Assessment (CHA), this rate is higher than the Adirondack Regional Health Network region (274 per 100,000), which includes Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Warren, and Washington Counties. In addition to its main hospital campus, Glens Falls Hospital operates 20 regional health care facilities. On July 1, 2020, Glens Falls Hospital became an affiliate of the Albany Med Health System.

Warren County has one Federally Qualified Health Center, Hudson Headwaters Health Network. Hudson Headwaters Health Network is a nonprofit system of 21 community health centers with ten of the health centers located in Warren County. The health centers include two urgent care centers and a dental center all located in Warren County. Hudson Headwaters is the sole medical provider in much of the rural, medically underserved region. In the Glens Falls area, Hudson Headwaters is the only primary care "safety net" provider. To address the aging population trends and associated growing medical and supportive service needs, Hudson Headwaters recently opened in Glens Falls the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), a community-based program that provides coordinated medical and social services to eligible older adults who want to continue living in their own home despite chronic care needs. PACE services portions of Warren, Washington, and Saratoga Counties.

The County Health Department also provides both mandated and voluntary programs to the residents of the County. The Public Health programs in the department include immunization programs and clinics, preschool and early intervention programs for children with growth and developmental concerns, lead poisoning prevention, disease control programs, health education, rabies (for both animals and humans) and emergency preparedness. Health Services' Homecare Services is also one of the largest homecare agencies in the County.

There are four nursing home facilities within the County, totaling 409 nursing home beds resulting in a total nursing home beds rate of 637 per 100,000. There are four adult care facilities totaling 248 beds resulting in an adult care facility rate of 633 per 100,000. Existing nursing homes in the County are also struggling: the Elderwood Skilled Nursing Facility in Johnsbury was recently denied a lifeline funding request of \$2.5 million to the NYS Department of Health through their Vital Access Provider (VAP) program.

One of the biggest challenges the healthcare providers in the County are facing is staffing. Many of the current healthcare staff, especially the nurses, are nearing retirement age and attracting medical professionals to the region is a challenge. Based on current data from the Health Resources and Service Administration, Warren County is considered a Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) for both primary care providers and mental health providers.

While the County and its partners offer a diverse range of services, accessing these services can be a challenge.



This shortage has led to closures, consolidations, and the loss of critical specialized medical services, such as emergency pediatric care. This is not an issue unique to Warren County; attracting medical professionals has been an issue for much of rural America. Based on NPR reporting, "only 1% of doctors in their final year of medical school [...] want to live in communities under 10,000; only 2% want to live in towns of 25,000 or fewer."

SOCIAL SERVICES

Warren County offers a range of social services to support its residents, addressing needs related to health, housing, employment, and family welfare. The County's Department of Social Services provides essential programs such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). Services also include child and adult protective services, foster care, adoption support, and services for seniors. Additionally, the County supports residents through mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, aimed at improving the well-being of individuals struggling with these challenges.

The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce currently has 104 non-profit members, the majority of which are located in County and count Warren County as its primary service area. Services offered by these organizations range the continuum of services, including emergency food services, shelters, early childhood education, senior services, and employment training programs.

However, the needs of Warren County residents often exceed the available resources, especially in areas such as affordable housing, transportation, mental health services, and food insecurity. The rural nature of the County presents challenges in accessing services, particularly for low-income families and individuals living in more isolated areas. There is also a growing demand for more comprehensive mental health care and addiction treatment services, reflecting national trends. As the population ages, there is an increasing need for senior care, home health services, and caregiver support, as well as continued investment in child welfare services to meet the needs of vulnerable families.

Food insecurity is an issue in the County, fueled by rising food prices and lack of access to fresh food.

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, food prices in Warren County have seen significant increases over the past few years, mirroring trends observed nationwide. From 2020 to 2024, the overall cost of food and beverages rose by about 22%; this rate is higher than the overall inflation rate, indicating that food prices have been particularly impacted by economic conditions. This has resulted in 23% of adults in Warren County to report they are food insecure (just under the Statewide average of 24.9%) according to a 2023 NYS Department of Health study. Food insecurity in the County is compounded by the limited access many residents have to supermarkets. The USDA developed a Food Access Research Atlas to identify areas across the Country that have limited supermarket access due to distance and vehicle ownership. Local food banks and pantries have observed these trends and are working to support communities by providing essential services and distributing food to those in need; however, pantries are often stretched thin, given the growing demand and the increasing prices they face along with consumers.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

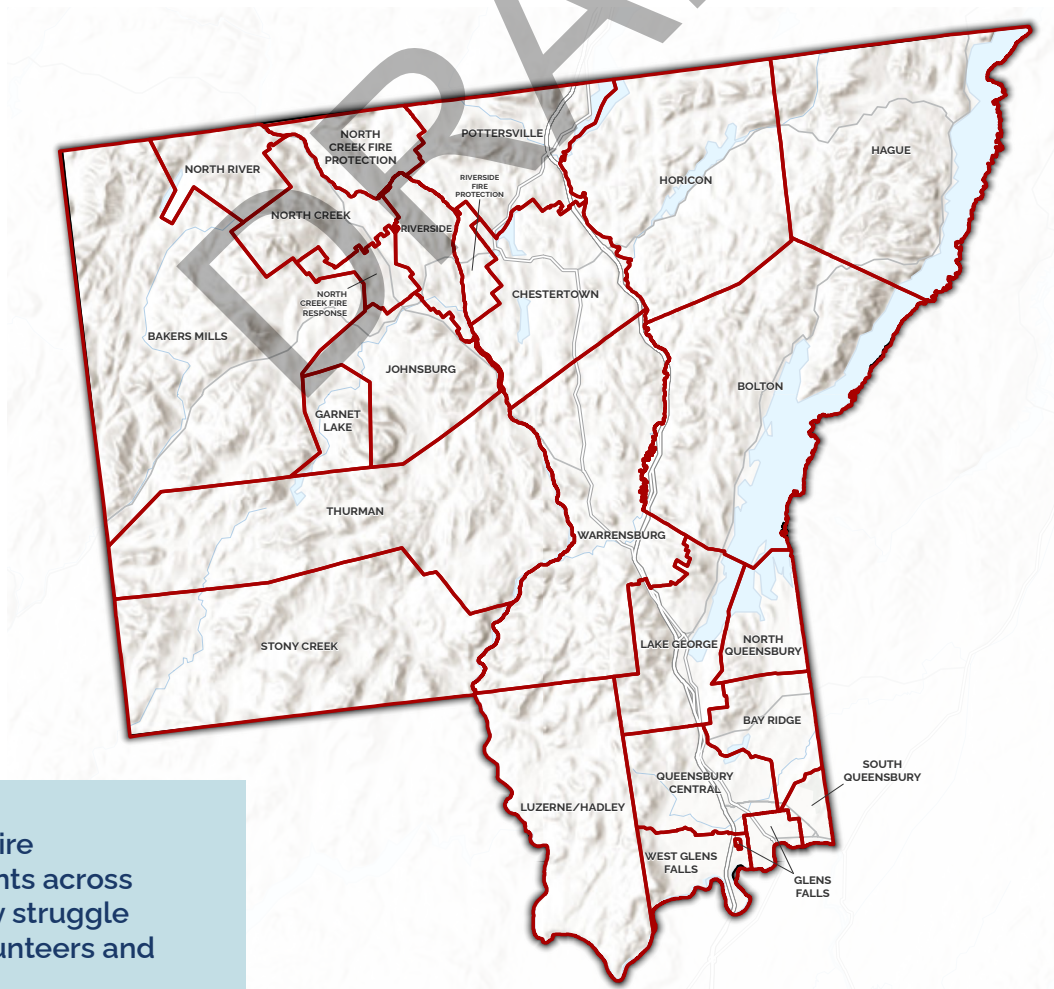
Warren County is served by 22 Fire Departments, 13 Emergency Medical Service (EMS) agencies, and seven Fire Department First Response Agencies. At the County level, there is an Office of Emergency Services (OES) Department with a fire coordinator and EMS coordinator, the roles of which are mandated by the State. There are also state and federal mandates related to emergency preparedness planning. The Department supports the County's hazardous materials response team and coordinates efforts to respond to weapons of mass destruction. The Department

coordinates applications for grants for emergency preparedness and response funds. In the event of an emergency, the OES serves as the response coordinator and coordinates the Emergency Operations Center. The OES also works with the local municipalities as they develop their response plans and conduct drills. The Department also had a substantial role in coordinating the County and localities' response to COVID-19.

The Department relies heavily on volunteers and deputy coordinators during events and to help support the local EMS and fire agencies. EMS and Fire Departments across the County struggle to find

volunteers and paid staff. To address reduced volunteerism, most EMS agencies in the County are using paid staff, and there have been discussion and support for the County to begin operating an EMS transport service or paramedic first response to provide a back up to the volunteers. Even with the shift to paid positions, however, staffing remains an issue, as the EMS services in the County cannot compete with the salaries offered in down-State counties. This EMS staffing issue is exacerbated by State-level changes in provider levels; with the removal of mid-level providers, additional costs and training are needed for these providers to advance.

WARREN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS



EMS and Fire Departments across the County struggle to find volunteers and paid staff.

WARREN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

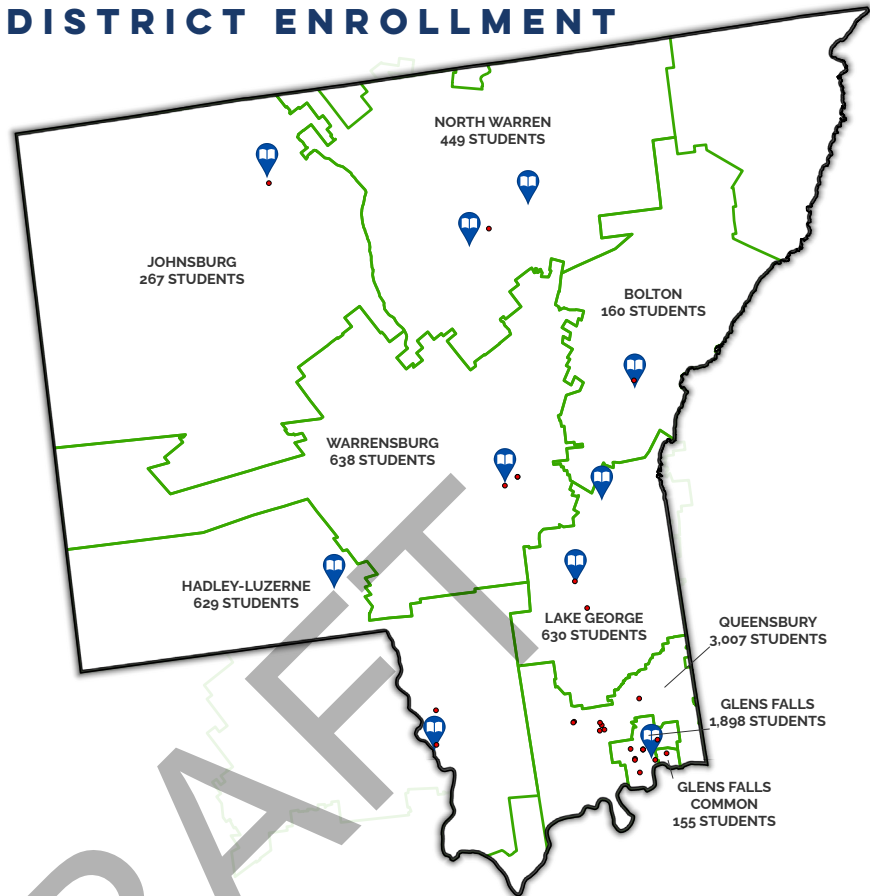
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Educational facilities provide essential learning opportunities and resources, preparing individuals for future success. Warren County has nine public school districts, with a total enrollment of 7,833 students (2022-23 school year) and four-year graduation rate of 85%. Many of these school districts are high quality and consistently top ranked K-12 public school education: The Albany Business Review publishes its Annual Schools Report, which provides school district rankings for Capital Region districts in various academic areas. Warren County school districts consistently rank in the top 20 in the Capital Region.

The County's nine public schools are a point of pride and an attraction to the region. Many families are attracted to smaller schools over larger schools due to benefits of smaller student-teacher ratios, the sense of community they provide, and safe, close-knit nature. The schools across the County offer a range of diverse, unique curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at While the small size of the County's schools is a point of pride, class size continues to decline across the County, which comes with additional challenges. Based on data from the Empire Center, school enrollment across Warren County decreased by 15.5% between 2012 and 2022, exceeding the statewide enrollment decline of 8% over that same period. The three school districts that saw the largest decline were Lake George (-30.5%), Bolton (-26.2%), and Hadley Luzerne (-25%).

With declining enrollment, several schools in the County have already begun combining athletics. The Johnsburg and Minerva school districts – located just six miles apart – considered combining, but the merger was voted down, highlighting the role schools have in local sense of pride. Despite this pushback and absent a significant shift in population trends, additional sharing of services such as Special Education and other academics, will need to be considered if the districts want to continue to provide the range of offerings that families and students desire. This is a trend that is being seen across NYS's rural school districts, as outlined in the Rural Schools Association of New York State's 2023 Policy Brief. The State Education Department is currently exploring legislation to authorize greater flexibility in choosing shared and regional educational programs and services.



The County's public schools are a point of pride and attraction to the region, but are all facing declining enrollment, which comes with additional challenges.

The declining school enrollment could also impact access to NYS funding. In this year's budget, the Governor originally proposed significant changes to the Foundation Aid Formula, which is the main way that school money gets allocated. Under the formula that the Governor proposed, many districts around the State would receive less money than they anticipated.

The Governor also proposed eliminating a provision known as "hold harmless," which has traditionally ensured that schools receive at least as much funding as the year before, regardless of any enrollment loss. While both the state Senate and the Assembly rejected the Governor's Foundation Aid formula changes and the elimination of "hold harmless," the State is advancing a study of how to change the Foundation Aid Formula, which would impact funding for school districts across the County.

HIGHER EDUCATION

For higher education, SUNY Adirondack, located in Queensbury, is the only college based in Warren County. It offers a wide array of associate degree programs and vocational training, supporting around 2,994 students annually. Additionally, SUNY Plattsburgh operates a satellite campus at SUNY Adirondack, extending opportunities for undergraduate and graduate studies within the County. Warren and Washington Counties are the two service counties responsible for the formation, leadership, and financial support of the institution. Each County appoints members of the College's Board of Trustees

and provides annual financial support. In 2023, Warren County contributed \$2.6 million towards SUNY Adirondack; Washington County contributed \$2.1 million. The decline in enrollment at the public schools is having spillover impacts at the community college (SUNY Adirondack), as much of the school's enrollment has historically come from regional public school graduates.

LIBRARIES

In Warren County, libraries extend far beyond traditional book lending; they are community centers that foster connections. They provide key access to digital resources and internet connectivity, crucial for bridging the digital divide in rural areas. Libraries also serve as community gathering spaces, offering programs that cater to learning and social interaction, which are especially beneficial for our aging population.

There are ten libraries in the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) are located in Warren County. The libraries are well distributed and resource rich, with the Crandall Public Library being a notable hub. It offers a variety of services including book lending, digital resources, and community programs for all ages. The library system's branches provide additional access points for residents to engage in educational activities. The County has consistently supported SALS with a \$55,000 budget allocation each year.

CHILD CARE

Child care services in Warren County are facilitated by the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network (SACCN). This organization provides support and resources for licensed day care centers, school-age programs, and family day care homes, ensuring that working families have access to reliable and affordable child care options.

Warren County, like other regions across the State and nation, has been faced with a significant decline in child care availability. Based on the SACCN's most recent (2024) Child Care Needs Assessment Report: Warren & Washington Counties, there are 33 licensed/registered child care providers in the County. This is a decline from 50 providers in 2019. 45% of surveyed parents in Warren County stated that the registered and licensed child care providers whom they called did not have openings for their child(ren) and there was a wait of several months in many programs especially for infant care. The child care shortage not only has long-term developmental impact on children but also further depletes the workforce, with parents unable to return to the workforce due to lack of child care.

There is not enough child care to meet the needs of County residents.