



KENT COUNTY: ADULTS RECEIVING TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE IN 2018

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Despite its small size, Maryland is a diverse state. Its 24 jurisdictions sometimes have very different populations, and, consequently, may have very different needs. While statewide data can be extraordinarily helpful to state-level program managers and policymakers, it may not reflect the customers that local departments of social services see in their offices.

To assist local departments in serving their Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) customers better, we are examining adult recipients in each of the 24 jurisdictions over the course of four years. In this brief, we focus on Kent County, which is located on the Upper Eastern Shore, equidistant from Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Kent County's percentage of families with children under 18 years of age living in poverty (17.3%) is seven percentage points higher than the state average (10.1%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018c). The median family income (\$74,097) in Kent County is roughly \$20,000 lower than the median family income in Maryland (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018c). Despite the high poverty rate, Kent County makes up less than one percent of the statewide caseload receiving TCA benefits in state fiscal year 2018, primarily due to the fact that the overall population of Kent County is only 20,000 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a).

Even though adult recipients in Kent County are a small portion of the state's TCA caseload, it is worth noting ways in which they differ from recipients in other parts of the state. Table 1, on the following page, provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of adult TCA recipients in Kent County. They are Caucasian (48.6%) and African American (50.0%) women (85.1%) in their mid-30s who never married (64.4%). Compared to the rest of the state, Kent County recipients are much more likely to be Caucasian (48.6% vs. 22.2%). Although a majority of recipients have never been married, the percentage of recipients who are married or who have been married are both higher than the state average.

KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ Kent County adult recipients are typically Caucasian and African American women in their mid-30s who never married.
- ❖ About 30% of adults have not finished high school, and over one in three have a disability that is expected to last over 12 months.
- ❖ While three in five Kent County TCA recipients were employed in the previous year, only one third of these recipients worked for all four quarters.
- ❖ Earnings among employed adult recipients in that year were about the same as the state median at \$6,220.
- ❖ The two most common industries in which Kent County adult recipients were employed during the year before they received TCA were restaurants and administrative and support services.

Table 1. Demographics

Gender	
% Female	85.1%
Age	
Average	33.2
Race & ethnicity	
% Caucasian [^]	48.6%
% African American [^]	50.0%
Marital status	
% Married	13.7%
% Never Married	64.4%
% Divorced / Separated / Widowed	21.9%

Note: [^]=non-Hispanic. Some categories for race and ethnicity are excluded for confidentiality. Valid percentages reported.

For adult recipients who are required to work or to participate in work-related activities, educational attainment is a particularly important characteristic, as it can affect the job opportunities that are available to customers. Figure 1 places educational attainment among Kent County adult recipients in context with adult

recipients statewide and in other jurisdictions. The lines represent the range of values seen in all 24 jurisdictions, with the bars at the top and bottom indicating the *statewide high*—the highest value across all jurisdictions—and the *statewide low*—the lowest value across all jurisdictions. The square shows what the statewide average is, and the colored diamond denotes where Kent County falls.

Comparing Kent County with the rest of the state shows that adult recipients in Kent County have roughly the same educational attainment as the statewide average. Three in 10 (29.7%) Kent County adult recipients have yet to finish high school or receive a GED, which is slightly higher than the statewide average (27.2%).

The percentage of adult recipients in Kent County who have finished high school (66.2%) is also slightly higher than the statewide average (63.1%), though it is still

Data and Study Population

Data comes from the Client Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES) and the Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS), which are the administrative data systems for TCA and Unemployment Insurance (UI), respectively. CARES provides individual- and case-level data on demographics and program participation for families receiving TCA. Additional data on adult recipients' disabilities comes from WORKS, which documents participation in work and work-related activities. The MABS system includes data from all employers covered by the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) law and the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Together, these account for approximately 91% of all Maryland civilian employment.

There are a variety of limitations to MABS data. MABS only reports data on a quarterly basis, which means that it is not possible to calculate weekly or monthly employment and earnings. Another limitation is that MABS does not contain data on certain types of employment, such as self-employment, independent contractors, and informal employment; consequently, earnings from under-the-table jobs are not included. Finally, MABS has no information on employment outside Maryland. Over one in 10 (12.2%) Kent County residents works out of the state, which is much higher than the national average (3.7%) but less than the state average (16.8%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b). As a result, we may be understating employment and some earnings.

The study population in this report is the unique number of adults who received at least one month of TCA in SFY 2018 (July 2017 to June 2018). Statewide, 20,798 adults received TCA in SFY 2018; in Kent County, 74 adults received TCA.

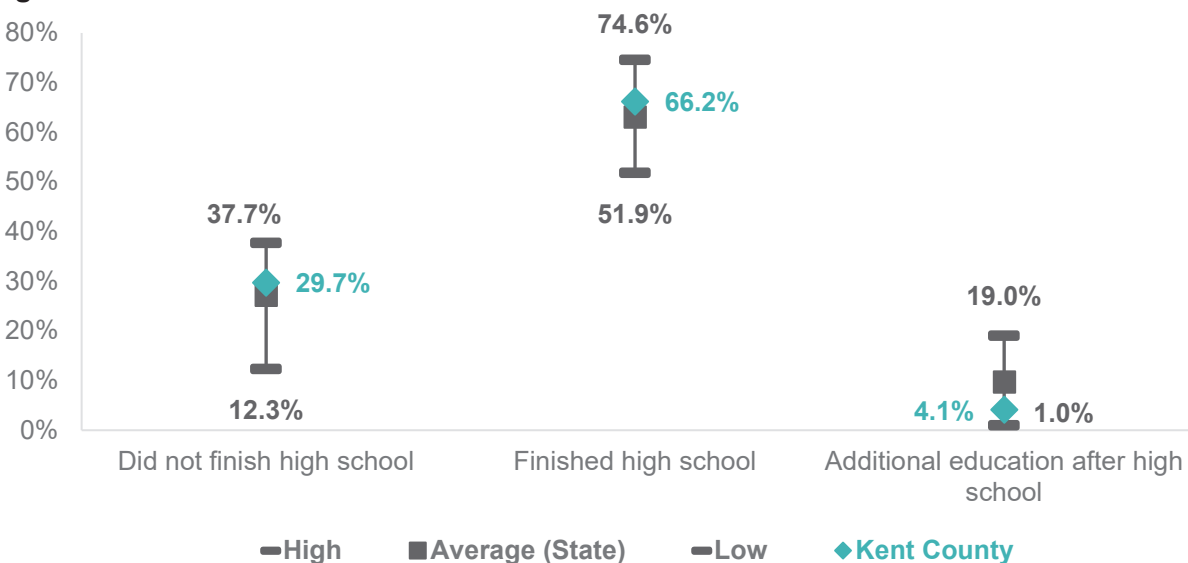
eight percentage points below the statewide high (74.6%). Conversely, only about one in 20 (4.1%) completed additional education after high school, which is less than the state average (9.7%) but higher than the statewide low (1.0%).

This suggests that while recipients usually finish high school, they experience barriers to additional education after high school. Additional education may be beneficial, as our research shows that economic stability and good jobs are both more likely when adults have more education (Nicoli, Passarella, & Born, 2013; James & Nicoli, 2016). Obtaining additional education may improve the outcomes of these adult recipients.

The Maryland Department of Human Services is already pursuing one potential avenue to increase educational attainment through partnering with the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation’s Division of Workforce

Development and Adult Learning. Adult basic education can help adult recipients who lack a high school education with any number of goals, from improving literacy to completing a GED. Furthermore, federal law, in the form of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), encourages this kind of partnership, and Maryland has been a leader in ensuring that high-need adults, such as TCA recipients, receive priority of service as the law mandates (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2016). The Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board provides WIOA services to residents of Kent, Queen Anne’s, Caroline, Talbot, and Dorchester Counties. Additionally, Chesapeake College provides adult education courses at an elementary school in the county, including GED preparation and English-language classes. However, there are no institutions offering trade certificate programs. Residents must travel to other counties, which could necessitate longer trips.

Figure 1. Educational Attainment



Note: *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. General Education Development program (GED) certificates are included in high school completion rates. Valid percentages reported.

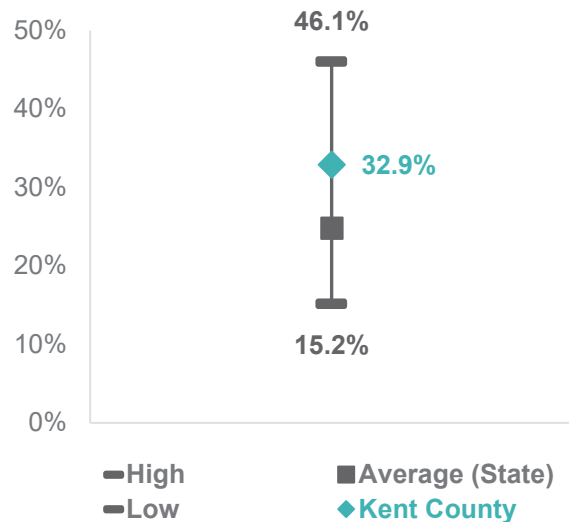
Partnerships with other entities within Maryland’s workforce system may also be beneficial for adult recipients with disabilities. Figure 2 shows the percentage of adult recipients who have disabilities that are expected to last longer than 12 months.¹ As with education, the figure includes the percentage for Kent County adult recipients, the statewide average, and the highest and lowest percentages among all 24 jurisdictions. About one in three (32.9%) adult recipients in Kent County has such a disability, compared to one quarter of adults across the state. The range across the state is much larger, though. In the jurisdiction with the highest percentage, 46% of adult recipients have long-term disabilities, compared to only 15% in the jurisdiction with the lowest percentage.

Although Kent County is eight percentage points above the state average, its small number of TCA recipients means that only a few individuals have a long-term disability. Still, these are customers who may require disability-related services. This could be anything from assistance with applications for federal disability programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), to support for finding and keeping jobs while also managing disabilities. Through a statewide contract with a vendor, caseworkers can already offer assistance to those who need help with applications. For those who want to work, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), located within the Maryland State Department of Education, may be an excellent resource. A local DORS office is in Elkton in neighboring Cecil County. Like the TCA program, DORS

¹ This data, which comes from WORKS, represents the percentage of adult recipients with an OTD code at any point in SFY 2018. OTD is a state-defined activity code indicating that the individual has a disability that is expected to last over 12 months.

is part of Maryland’s workforce system, so this is another way that closer collaboration with workforce partners may benefit TCA customers.

Figure 2. Percent with Disabilities Lasting 12+ Months

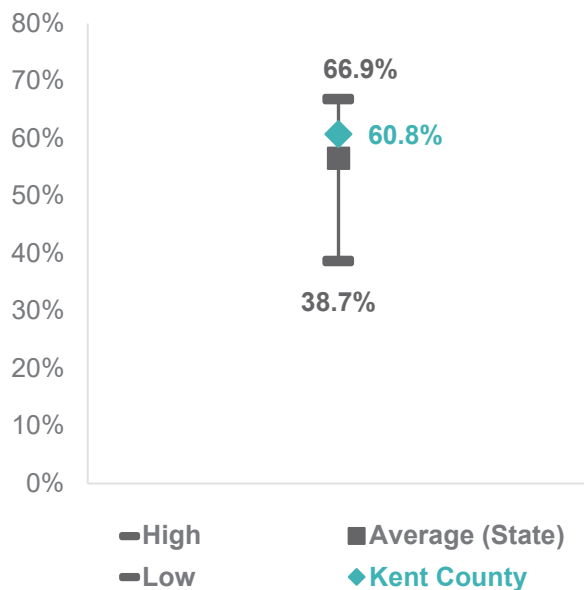


Note: *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

As TCA moves toward being more fully integrated with its workforce partners, understanding adult recipients’ work histories is even more important. After all, past employment experiences can shape future employment and earnings. To that end, Figure 3 displays the percentage of adult recipients who worked in the year before they began receiving TCA.² Three in five (60.8%) Kent County adult recipients were employed in that year, which is above the state average (56.6%), and only six percentage points below the jurisdiction with the highest percent of recipients employed (66.9%).

² This percentage reflects adult recipients who were engaged in formal employment in a job covered by the Maryland Unemployment Insurance system. Please see the sidebar on data on page 2 for more information.

Figure 3. Percent Employed
Year before TCA Receipt



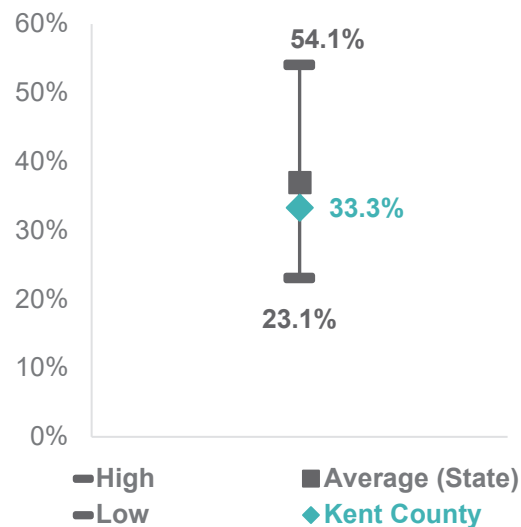
Note: *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

While these percentages provide useful information, it may also be helpful to know how many quarters adult recipients worked in the year before they began receiving TCA. Each year contains four quarters, so Figure 4 presents the percentage of employed adult recipients who worked all four quarters of that year. One in three (33.3%) employed Kent County adult recipients worked all four quarters, which is slightly below the statewide average (36.9%). There is considerable variation across the state, however. In the jurisdiction with the highest percentage, over half of employed adult recipients worked in all four quarters, but the statewide low is 23%.

Knowing that 61% of Kent County adult recipients were employed in the year before receiving TCA and one in three of those employed adults worked in all four quarters provides some context on what these recipients may need in order to become self-sufficient. Thus, while some adults may

need assistance in finding a job, those who find jobs may need ongoing services, at least at first, to help them maintain employment.

Figure 4. Percent Who Worked Four Quarters
Year before TCA Receipt



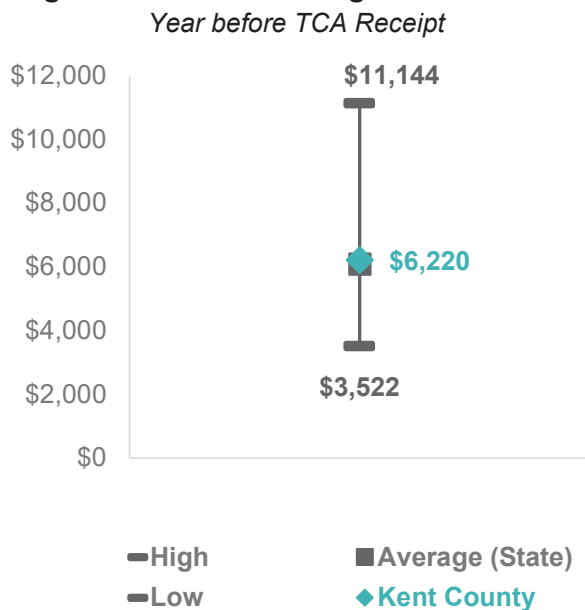
Note: *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

Another critical aspect of adult recipients' employment histories is how much they are able to earn. Figure 5 shows median earnings in the year before adult recipients began receiving TCA for Kent County, the state, and the jurisdictions with the highest and lowest earnings. Even though these earnings represent what employed adult recipients earned in one year, it is important to remember that these earnings usually do not reflect full-time, full-year employment. As Figure 4 revealed, many employed adults work less than four quarters in a year.

In Kent County, and across the state, median earnings are very low. Employed adult recipients in Kent County earned \$6,220 in the year before TCA receipt,

which about matches the state median. It is still over \$2,500 more than the statewide low, although it is about \$5,000 less than the statewide high. Regardless, even in the jurisdiction with the highest median earnings (\$11,144), earnings were far below \$20,780, which was the 2018 federal poverty threshold for a three-person household (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

Figure 5. Median Earnings



Note: *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Earnings are standardized to 2018 dollars.

These low wages add another piece to the puzzle. From earlier figures, we know that many adult recipients work before receiving TCA, but they often do not work in all four quarters. Low wages may be both cause and consequence of this inconsistent work. Adult recipients may be unable to earn enough to cover their job-related expenses,

such as transportation, uniforms, and child care, which may lead to an inability to work. At the same time, inconsistent work is likely to drive wages downward.

One strategy to increase wages focuses on the industries in which adult recipients work. Some jobs can be performed in a number of different industries. For example, administrative assistants may work in health care settings, in schools, or in private firms, but each of these industries may compensate administrative assistants differently. Helping adult recipients find employment in industries that offer higher pay is one way to increase self-sufficiency.

Since the total number of TCA recipients in Kent County is small, the number of recipients that had industry data was even smaller at 45 recipients. This small size means we can only report the two most common industries among Kent County adult recipients who worked in the year before receiving TCA, which were restaurants and administrative support services.³ Just over 30% of those who were employed in the year before receiving TCA worked in one of those two industries. Prior research has found that administrative and support services and restaurants are not associated with high earnings. Individuals who left TCA and initially worked in these industries have below-average earnings, and they were more likely to return to TCA (Nicoli, Passarella, & Born, 2014). They were also less likely to realize economic stability after exiting TCA (James & Nicoli, 2016).

³ Industries were identified with three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. Restaurants (NAICS code 722) are defined as full-service or fast food restaurants as well as caterers and mobile food services. Administrative and Support

Services (NAICS 561) are defined as organizations that support day-to-day operations—clerical, cleaning, and general management activities— and temporary employment services.

However, individuals who left TCA and initially worked in health care, government, or education industries have above-average earnings (Nicoli et al., 2014) and were more likely to attain economic stability after exit (James & Nicoli, 2016). Washington College is the top employer in Kent County—and UM Shore Medical at Chestertown is the third largest employer—suggesting that jobs in health care and education may be attainable for TCA recipients (Maryland Department of Commerce, 2019). Helping adult recipients work in higher paying industries is one potential pathway to increase earnings.

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