

# Introduction and Methods

## ***Background and purpose***

Beginning in late 2003, United Way of Knox County started bringing community stakeholders together to plan for a community needs assessment. With guidance from a local consultant, the Community Building Committee made up of United Way of Knox County board members laid out the initial framework for the assessment. United Way then convened a Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in April 2004 to clarify the scope, purpose, and uses of the assessment, and to generate specific research questions and ideas for research methods. Members of this Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which is made up of representatives from the social service, education, government, civic, religious, and business sectors, also reviewed the draft household survey, completed key informant surveys, and offered support in their areas of expertise throughout the research process.

The 2004-2005 Community Assessment was designed to be used for several purposes, including:

- United Way fund distribution and strategic planning
- COMPASS community building process (COMPASS is a United Way model that helps communities to mobilize resources, select priority issues, and bring diverse stakeholders together to improve the community.)
- Grant writing and strategic planning by social service providers
- Local government planning
- Public fundraising and advocacy

The findings will be used by many stakeholders, including the United Way board and Fund Distribution Committee; United Way member agencies and other social service providers, including churches/faith-based groups and health care providers; funders; county and city government; state and local legislators; and many other non-profit organizations and governing bodies. This full report is intended to provide detailed information that may be used in grant writing and planning activities. Secondary data, including government statistics key indicators, are included in this report along with the results of the 2004-2005 Community Assessment.

## ***COMPASS community building process***

*COMPASS II* is a tool developed by United Way of America to guide local community-building initiatives. *COMPASS II* is designed to bring together diverse stakeholders to assess and document local strengths and needs, mobilize community resources, and select a limited number of priority issues on which to focus efforts to improve the community. The goal is to develop and implement a community impact plan that will improve people's lives and communities. *COMPASS II* involves eight phases:

1. Form a community partnership
2. Inventory key community assets
3. Collect and analyze community data

4. Create a community vision
5. Select priority issues and establish targeted community outcomes
6. Build an outcome-focused community impact plan
7. Take action
8. Track process, progress, and impact

The 2004-2005 Community Assessment involves the first three phases of this process, particularly Phase Three (collect and analyze community data). The results of this assessment will set the stage for creating a community vision, selecting priority issues, establishing community outcomes, and developing an impact plan.

The 2004-2005 Knox County Community Assessment used many of the tools provided in *COMPASS II*, although several modifications were made to meet local needs and budget constraints.

### ***Research questions***

This assessment aims to answer several questions. The top-priority questions identified by United Way of Knox County and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee are:

1. What do Knox County residents need? What needs are already being met, and what are the highest-priority unmet needs?
2. What assets do we already have to meet these needs?
3. Where are there overlaps in service or duplicated services?
4. Are people aware of existing resources and do they know how to access them?
5. What kinds of barriers do consumers face when trying to get help?
6. How satisfied are consumers with existing services?

Stakeholders identified several other important questions that were beyond the scope of this assessment and may be addressed by future research or through the COMPASS community-building process:

7. How satisfied are funders with the return on their investment?
8. What is the scope and severity of the unmet needs? How many people are in need, and what are the top priorities (needs versus wants)?
9. Which programs are most effective? Are we able to identify and document effective programs through outcome measurement and evaluation? If not, what resources are needed to do that?
10. What kinds of limitations do providers face when trying to offer help?
11. Are people aware of existing volunteer opportunities and do they know how to get involved?
12. What are the solutions to the problems? What are the best practices? How do you get the most “bang for the buck” in terms of prevention versus intervention?

### ***Methods***

The 2004-2005 Community Assessment drew upon several different research methods, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research team chose research methods based on the following criteria: 1) ability to produce valid and useful data that

would answer the specific research questions, and 2) cost effectiveness and most efficient use of limited resources. Stakeholders also agreed that it was critical to get representation from certain groups of Knox County residents:

- General public, including all geographic areas of Knox County
- Special populations and groups that are often consumers of United Way-funded social services (low-income families and adults, youth, and senior citizens)
- Community leaders and experts

Table 3 lists the research methods and describes the sample sources, target populations, and timing for each. Several surveys from the *COMPASS II* guide were used. The *Household and Social Service Provider Surveys* were modified or appended slightly to meet local needs, while the *Key Informant, Business, and Association Surveys* were used exactly as provided in *COMPASS II*. The survey instruments and data analysis software provided in the *COMPASS II* guide were a very cost-effective way to collect quantitative data. The Community Building Committee developed the *Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey* specifically for the Knox County Community Assessment.

The assessment employed a variety of sampling techniques for the surveys, including purposive samples of low-income adults (*Household Survey*) and community experts (*Key Informant, Social Service, and Business/Associations Surveys*), a convenience sample of the general population at local fairs and festivals, such as the Knox County Fair, and a random sample of residents who received the *Household Survey* by mail. More detail about each sampling method is provided in each survey section of this report.

Three sets of focus groups were held with special populations: three groups with low-income parents of young children, four groups with youth ages 14-18, and four groups with senior citizens ages 55-87. The goals of these focus groups were to:

- Identify community strengths, needs, and unmet needs
- Prioritize needs
- Assess awareness of, satisfaction with, and barriers to existing services
- Hear from groups who may not be well-represented in the household survey or other research
- Provide useful reports that could be released prior to the final assessment report

Table 3: Research methods

Method	Sample source and target population	Number of respondents or participants	When data were collected
<b>COMPASS II surveys</b>			
<i>Household Survey</i>	1) General population: convenience sample at fair and festivals and random sample mail survey 2) Low-income adults: purposive sample of emergency assistance agency consumers	442 total (133 at fairs and festivals, 210 through mail survey, and 99 at emergency assistance agencies)	July 2004-September 2005
<i>Key Informant Survey</i>	Community leaders and volunteers from social service, business, and civic sectors	124	June-July 2004
<i>Social Service Provider Survey (Round 1 COMPASS survey and Round 2 Update on Funding Cuts and Increases Survey)</i>	Representatives from social service organizations	56	Round 1: June-August 2004 Round 2 Update: June-August 2005
<i>Businesses and Associations Survey</i>	Representatives from businesses and civic groups	34	June-July 2004
<b>Focus groups</b>			
Low-income parents of young children	Lower-income parents of at least one child age 0-5 (Parents of Head Start students and participants in OSU Extension's parenting classes)	17	May-June 2004
Youth	Youth ages 14-18 (Mount Vernon High School seniors, Alternative Center 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> graders, and 10 <sup>th</sup> graders in the Knox County Career Center's Career-Based Intervention program)	32	December 2004-May 2005

<b>Table 3 continued</b>			
Senior citizens	Seniors ages 55-87 (Sanctuary Community Action, Interchurch Social Services, Fredericktown Senior Center, Station Break, Kno-Ho-Co RSVP and Foster Grandparent programs, and Centerburg Senior Services)	28	December 2004-June 2005
<b>Other methods</b>			
<i>Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey</i>	1) Low income adults (parent focus group participants and emergency assistance consumer household survey respondents) 2) Youth (focus group participants) 3) Senior citizens (focus group participants)	174	May 2004-June 2005
Secondary data	2000 US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio Department of Health, etc.	Various	Various

Table 4 lists the research methods that were used and the types of information they were designed to assess.

**Table 4: Type of information collected by each research method**

Method	Perceived strengths	Assets	Household needs (concerns in own household)	Perceived community needs and high-priority issues	Awareness of and satisfaction with existing social services	Barriers to help
<i>Household Survey</i>	X		X	X		
<i>Key Informant Survey</i>	X	X		X		
<i>Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey</i>					X	
<i>Social Service Provider Survey (Round 1 COMPASS survey and Round 2 Update on Funding Cuts and Increases Survey)</i>		X				X
<i>Businesses and Associations Survey</i>		X				
Focus groups with low-income parents of young children	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus groups with youth	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus groups with senior citizens	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: 2004-05 Community Assessment Research Plan

### Who was represented?

Approximately 700 Knox County residents participated in a survey or focus group for this community assessment<sup>1</sup>. Specific participant characteristics for each research method are provided throughout this report. Table 11 displays the demographic characteristics of household survey respondents compared to the total Knox County population. Overall, the residents who participated in a survey or focus group for this Community Assessment were:

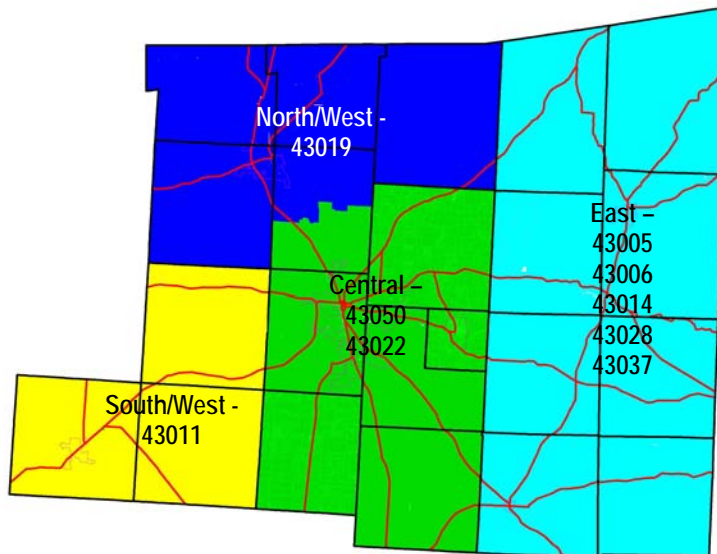
- More likely to be from lower-income households
- More likely to be female

<sup>1</sup> A total of 733 residents completed surveys or participated in focus groups. As intended, there was some overlap in terms of who completed the *Key Informant*, *Social Service*, and *Business/Association Surveys*. Duplication was strongly discouraged for the *Household Survey*, although it is possible that some residents completed more than one *Household Survey*, or participated in both a focus group and a survey.

- Similar to the Knox County population in terms of area of residence (geography), age, race/ethnicity, and whether or not they had children living with them.

**Geography.** All areas of the county were represented. For the purposes of this report, Knox County has been divided into four regions, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Knox County and the four regions, by zip code and city/ village



Source: Knox County Regional Planning Commission, 2005.

Surveys were collected at sites throughout the county and via mail, and focus groups were conducted in Mount Vernon, Centerburg, Fredericktown, and Danville. Table 5 displays the total number of household survey respondents and focus group participants from each of the four regions. This geographic distribution of research participants reflects the overall geographic distribution of the county’s population, with roughly half of Knox Countians residing in the two central zip code areas (43050 and 43022).

Table 5: Residence of *Household Survey* respondents and focus group participants (by zip code area)

City/Town/Village (zip code)	Household Survey respondents and focus group participants (n=518)		Knox County Population (2004)*
	Number	Percent	Percent
Mount Vernon/Gambier/Central (43050, 43022)	285	55%	51%
Fredericktown/North/West (43019)	61	12%	15%
Centerburg/South/West (43011)	54	10%	12%
Danville/Howard/East (43005, 43006, 43014, 43028, 43037)	98	19%	22%
Other	20	4%	NA

\*Source: 2004 population estimates from the US Census Bureau, compiled by the Knox County Regional Planning Commission. Calculations are based on the township population estimates shown in Table 6.

**Income.** Largely due to sampling methods designed to ensure strong participation from low-income residents, lower annual incomes were somewhat more common among survey and focus group participants than among the overall county population. Stakeholders felt it was important to get strong representation from lower-income adults and families since they are more likely to be consumers of United Way-funded programs and other social services.

Respondents to the *Key Informant Survey* were often professionals and probably represented higher-income residents, although these respondents were not asked to report their annual household income.

**Age.** Aside from over-representation of adults among survey respondents (children and teens were not invited to complete surveys), there was a fairly even distribution across age groups among research participants that roughly mirrors the distribution of ages in the county. To make sure that youth and senior citizens were included in the community assessment, four focus groups were held with teens, ages 14-18 years old, and four focus groups were held with seniors, ages 55-87.

**Gender.** With the exception of the youth focus groups, all surveys and focus groups had more female participants than male participants. Sixty-six percent of household survey respondents were female, compared to 51% of Knox County residents (2000 US Census).

**Parent status and race/ethnicity.** Overall, survey and focus group participants were very similar to the overall county population in terms of race/ethnicity and households with children. Mirroring Knox County's population, the vast majority of research participants were White. Forty-one percent of household survey respondents had children under age 18, compared to 35% of Knox County households (2000 US Census). To ensure representation from this important social service consumer group, three focus groups were held with parents of young children.

### What were the limitations of the research methods?

When interpreting the results of the Community Assessment, it is important to keep in mind the sampling methods that were used and the limits to what can be generalized to the overall county population from the data. The Assessment draws heavily upon purposive and convenience sampling strategies. These strategies are cost-effective and were employed to obtain participation from specific groups (low-income adults, experts, youth, etc.), but are not as strong as random selection in terms of producing results that can be directly generalized to the overall population of Knox County. Random sampling was used for the mailed household survey, but was not feasible or desirable for other methods. Overall, this assessment draws upon a balance of qualitative and quantitative methods, and a variety of sampling strategies—all of which have strengths and limitations. Results of any one method (i.e., the household survey) should be viewed in context with results from other methods (i.e. focus groups and the key informant survey). This “triangulation” of research approaches should help to identify high-priority issues that emerge as key research findings across multiple methods.

The results of this assessment are particularly helpful for describing perceptions, opinions, priorities, strengths, assets, and barriers. These results are not as helpful for describing the incidence or prevalence of specific problems, such as unemployment, obesity, or teen pregnancy. Secondary data and statistics collected by government agencies and others are much more useful sources of that type of information. Selected US Census and other secondary data are included below and in Appendices C and D of this report.

The Community Assessment first began in May 2004, and data have been collected over a one-and-a-half year period, ending in September 2005. Recent concerns that are emerging at the time this report is being written, such as increases in gas and heating costs and bomb threats at local schools, are therefore not reflected in this report.

## Demographic profile of Knox County

### General demographic characteristics

Table 6 displays several demographic characteristics for Knox County with Ohio data for comparison. Between 2000 and 2004, Knox County's population grew an estimated 6%, much faster than the 0.9% for the state as a whole. The distribution of age groups, households with children, and gender groups in Knox County is very similar to Ohio overall. Compared to Ohio, Knox County has lower median household incomes, per capita money incomes, and median housing values. Knox County also has a much higher proportion of white residents (98%) compared to Ohio (85%). While the percent of Knox Countians who have at least a high school diploma (82%) is almost identical to the percent of Ohioans overall who have graduated from high school (83%), a smaller proportion of the county's residents are college graduates (17%, compared to 21% for Ohio). Knox County residents reported traveling an average of 25.8 minutes to get to work, slightly higher than 22.9 minutes state average. Finally, Knox County's home ownership rate (76%) is markedly higher than the overall state rate (69%).

Table 6: Demographic characteristics of Knox County and Ohio

	Knox County	Ohio
Population, 2004 estimate	57,785	11,459,011
Population, 2000	54,500	11,353,140
Population, percent change April 1 2000 to July 1 2004	6.0%	0.9%
<b>Annual household income (1999)</b>		
Less than \$10,000	8%	9%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	22%	20%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	34%	31%
\$50,000 or more	36%	40%
Median household income	\$38,877	\$40,956
Per capita money income	\$17,695	\$21,003
<b>Age</b>		
Under 19 years	25%	28%
20 to 34 years	19%	20%
35-54 years	29%	30%
55-64 years	10%	9%
65 or more years	14%	13%
<b>Household type</b>		
Household with children under age 18	35%	35%
No children in household	65%	65%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	49%	49%
Female	51%	51%
<b>Race/ ethnicity</b>		
White	98%	85%
Black or African American	0.7%	12%

American Indian	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	0.3%	1.2%
Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent	0.7%	1.9%
<b>Education</b>		
High school graduate or higher (percent of persons age 25+)	82%	83%
Bachelors degree or higher (percent of persons age 25+)	17%	21%
<b>Other social, housing, and geographic characteristics</b>		
Language other than English spoken at home (percent age 5+)	5%	6%
Mean travel time to work (minutes) (workers age 16+)	25.8	22.9
Homeownership rate	76%	69%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$92,100	\$103,700
Persons per household	2.56	2.49
Persons per square mile	103.4	277.3

Source: US Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts from 2000 Census

Table 7 displays 2004 population estimates, income, and poverty data for each township, city, and village in Knox County. The City of Mount Vernon is by far the largest municipality, with an estimated 2004 population of 16,019. Median household incomes tended to be highest, and poverty lowest, in townships in the central and northwest part of the county. Conversely, incomes were lowest and poverty was highest in the City of Mount Vernon and in the eastern portion of the county.

**Table 7: Population, income, and poverty by area, city, village, and township**

	Total population (2004 estimates)	Median household income (1999)	Percent of individuals below poverty level (1999)	Percent of children below poverty level (1999)
<b>KNOX COUNTY</b>	57,785	\$38,877	10.1%	15.6%
<b>MOUNT VERNON/ GAMBIER/CENTRAL</b>	28,659			
Mount Vernon city	16,019	\$29,801	15.6%	20.7%
Gambier village	2,011	\$51,964	8.0%	5.2%
Clinton	2,942	\$33,750	9.2%	12.8%
College	385	\$57,731	8.2%	3.2%
Miller	1,046	\$47,222	3.9%	8.5%
Monroe	2,402	\$42,351	5.2%	4.9%
Morgan	954	\$49,444	4.8%	8.3%
Pleasant	1,590	\$51,739	5.1%	9.3%
Morris, south (65% of Morris, Mount Vernon area)*	1,310	NA	NA	NA
Morris, total (includes areas near Mount Vernon and Fredericktown)*	(2,015)	\$48,550	6.0%	8.2%

<b>FREDERICKTOWN/ NORTH/WEST</b>	8,536			
Fredericktown village	2,537	\$36,354	7.1%	9.2%
Berlin	1,844	\$49,676	1.6%	NA
Middlebury	1,226	\$40,000	7.5%	5.9%
Morris, north (35% of Morris, Fredericktown area)*	705	NA	NA	NA
Pike	1,300	\$41,780	4.7%	2.9%
Wayne	924	\$59,674	NA	NA
<b>CENTERBURG/SOUTH</b>	6,510			
Centerburg village	1,481	\$39,750	5.6%	5.7%
Hilliar	1,815	\$45,946	5.4%	7.3%
Liberty	1,593	\$48,370	10.8%	13.3%
Milford	1,621	\$43,056	10.7%	18.4%
<b>DANVILLE/HOWARD/EAST</b>	14,080			
Danville village	1,102	\$28,636	15.2%	18.1%
Gann village	142	\$37,500	17.7%	25.6%
Martinsburg village	191	\$35,625	14.0%	10.3%
Brown	1,949	\$31,042	9.2%	11.6%
Butler	797	\$32,857	17.4%	21.8%
Clay	1,145	\$37,450	19.5%	27.4%
Harrison	814	\$46,705	15.8%	24.8%
Howard	5,196	\$49,167	4.3%	7.7%
Jackson	881	\$45,673	15.5%	41.7%
Jefferson	658	\$41,339	7.3%	4.2%
Union	1,205	\$31,888	16.2%	19.4%

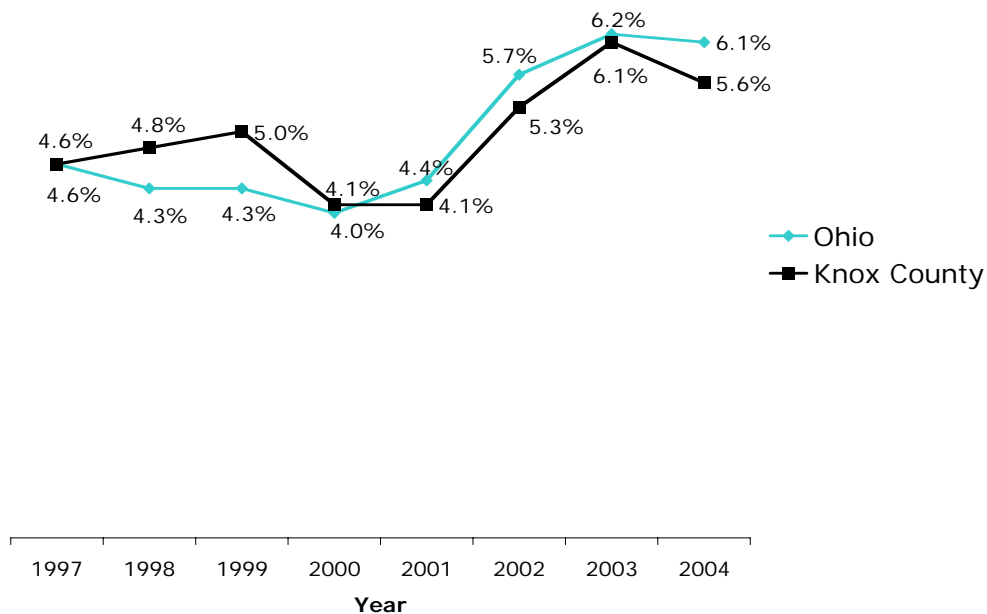
\*Morris Township is divided across two zip code areas. Approximately 65% of the Morris Township population resides in the Mount Vernon area, while approximately 35% reside in the Fredericktown area.

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 (for 1999 income data) and 2005 (for 2004 population estimates).

## Unemployment, poverty, and health insurance coverage

Figures 2-4 and Tables 8 and 9 reveal several important economic trends, highlighting changes since 1997 and differences between Knox County and Ohio overall. Knox County's unemployment rate has generally been near or slightly below Ohio's unemployment rate (see Figure 2). Knox County's unemployment rate rose to a high of 6.2% in 2003, and then dropped to 5.6% in 2004, making it lower than the overall Ohio unemployment rate of 6.1% in 2004. As unemployment fell in 2004, however, child poverty actually rose; the percent of Knox County children living in poverty (100% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL)<sup>2</sup>) rose sharply from 12.3% in 2002 to 19.2% in 2004 (see Figure 3). Knox County's proportion of children living at 100% FPL was slightly lower than Ohio's proportion (see Table 8). However, the proportion of Knox County children and adults living at 200% FPL was substantially higher than for Ohio overall, indicating a large number of "near poor" or "working poor" families. Indeed, in 2004, 51% of Knox County children were classified as living in households at 200% FPL or below.

Figure 2: Unemployment rate, 1997-2004, Knox County and Ohio



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data, 2005.

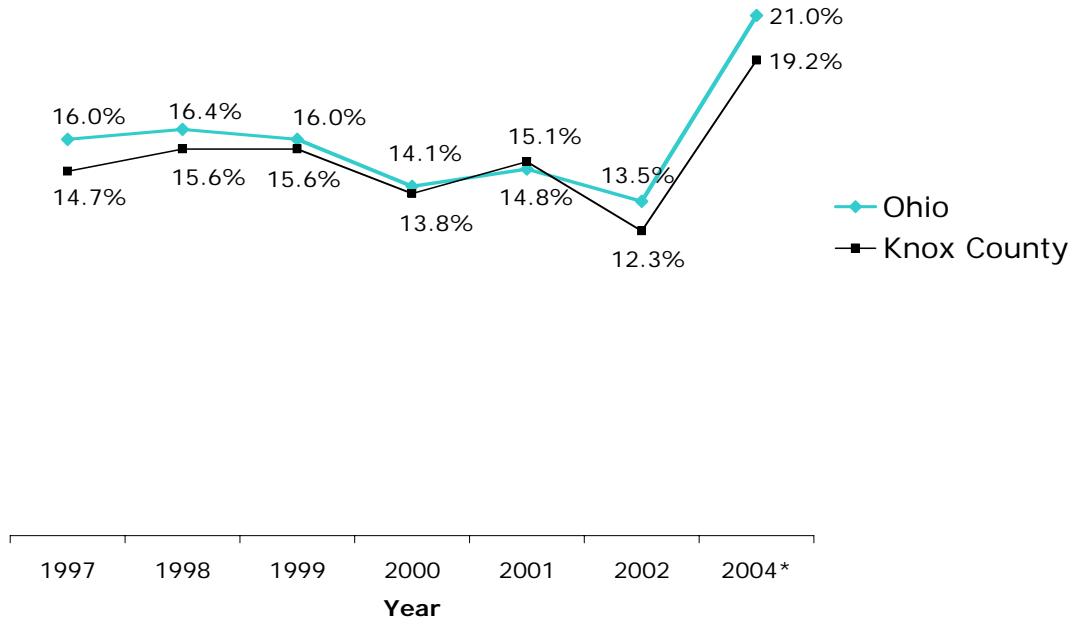
<sup>2</sup> For a family of three in 2004, 100% FPL was \$15,670 annual income and 200% FPL was \$31,340 annual income.

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 30, 2004. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

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**Figure 3: Percent of children (under age 18) in poverty in Knox County and Ohio, 1997-2004 (100% Federal Poverty Line)**



Source: \*2004 data are from the ODJFS Ohio Family Health Survey, Health Policy Institute of Ohio Health Data Brief, May 25, 2005; 1997-2002 data are from the US Census Bureau.

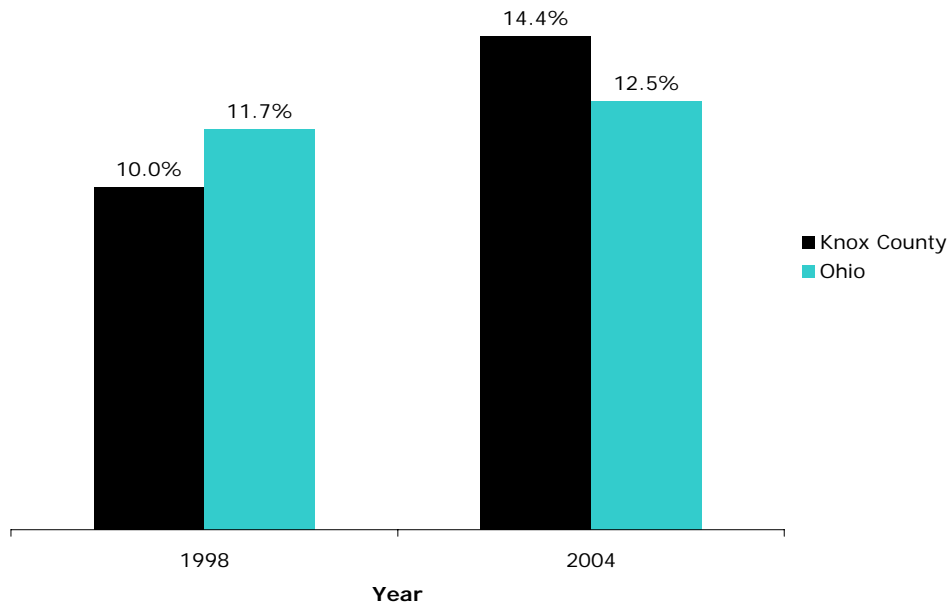
**Table 8: Child and adult poverty at 100% and 200% Federal Poverty Line in Knox County and Ohio, 2004**

	Knox County		Ohio
	Number	Percent	Percent
<b>Children (ages 0-17)</b>			
0%-100% FPL	2,602	19.2%	21.0%
0%-200% FPL	6,924	51.1%	43.8%
<b>Adults (ages 18 and up)</b>			
0%-100% FPL	7,531	19.4%	15.6%
0%-200% FPL	16,858	43.5%	36.5%

Source: 2004 ODJFS Ohio Family Health Survey, Health Policy Institute of Ohio Health Data Brief, May 25, 2005

At the same time that unemployment was falling, the proportion of Knox County residents without health insurance was rising. The uninsured rate for adults in Knox County rose from 10.0% in 1998 to 14.4% in 2004, above the 12.5% rate for Ohio adults overall in 2004.

Figure 4: Percent of adults (age 18 and older) uninsured in Knox County and Ohio, 1998 and 2004



Source: Ohio Family Health Survey, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 1999 and 2005

Table 9: Uninsured adults and children in Knox County and Ohio, 2004

	Children (ages 0-17)		Adults (ages 18 and older)	
	Percent	Estimated Number	Percent	Estimated Number
Knox County	2.1%	300	14.4%	6,200
Ohio	5.4%		12.5%	

Source: Ohio Family Health Survey, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2005