

# Study: Area among most expensive in Ohio

By Josh Sweigart  
Staff Writer

A study released Wednesday, July 30, by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies found vast disparities between the minimum costs of living across the state.

The study ranked Butler and Warren counties among the most expensive counties in Ohio, along with counties around Columbus and Cleveland. It states it costs up to \$37,373 per year for the mother of a preschooler to get by without public or private assistance in Warren County.

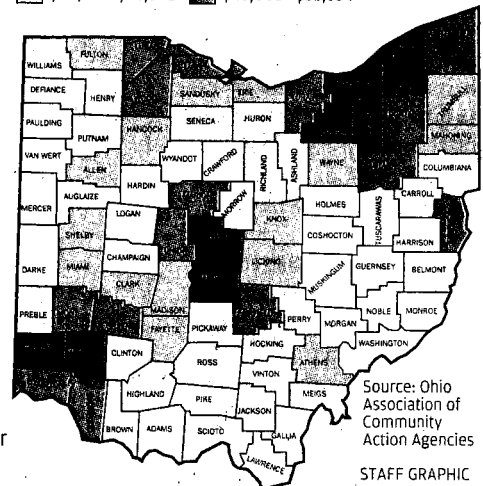
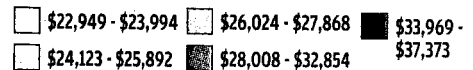
But the study's main finding — that statewide it costs more than twice the federal poverty level to merely pay the bills — was no surprise to Maureen Noe, president and CEO of the Butler County United Way.

"In order for people to really make ends meet in our society, they would have to make 2.5 times the level of poverty in America," Noe said.

And claims that housing and child care rank among the top costs for residents — together consuming more than half of many household budgets — is in line with, or below, what she sees every

## The amount of money needed to be economically self-sufficient in Ohio

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Ohio defines the income working families need to meet their basic necessities without private or public assistance. Basic minimum needs include: housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, miscellaneous expenses (clothing, telephone, household items), and taxes (minus federal and state tax credits). This calculation is for one adult and one preschooler. The federal poverty level for this group is \$14,000



day, Noe said.

A two-bedroom unit in Warren County costs \$903 per month, according to the study, and child care for one preschooler is \$760 per month.

The study states that in Butler County, it would cost \$46,638 for a parent with an infant and preschooler to get by.

The cost of living is putting a squeeze on many people, Noe said. "I think we have to really look as a society at how are we going to address the

issue on many levels."

The study states that living on Ohio's minimum wage of \$7 per hour — bringing home \$18,628 per year — is nearly impossible. It said it costs \$34,071 for a parent and a preschooler to survive without public or private assistance in Butler County.

"It just costs a lot to live in this society," said Philip Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies, which commissioned the study.

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# \$34,071 to make ends meet?

By Josh Sweigart  
Staff Writer

A single parent with a preschooler would have to earn \$34,071 a year to make ends meet in Butler County, according to a study released Wednesday, July 30, by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies.

Add an infant to that family and the cost of self-sufficiency rises to \$46,638. Then add in another adult, and it rises to \$52,188.

"That's probably right," said Tricia Baker, who works at U.S. Bank in downtown Hamilton. She is married with an 18-month-old infant.

She said the price of gas, formula, diapers and health care always makes it difficult to balance the budget.

The study's "self-sufficiency standards" are more than twice the federal poverty guideline. Unlike that national standard, the study took into account health care, transportation, housing and costs other than food.

"It accounts for the real costs of living today," said OACAA Executive Director Philip Cole. "We know that the federal poverty standards are ... not an adequate measure of poverty in the U.S."

The study was conducted by Diana Pearce, director of

the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington. It's the most recent and comprehensive study of its kind to date, Cole said.

"Many families do not earn self-sufficiency wages, particularly if they have recently entered (or re-entered) the work force or live in high-cost or low-wage areas," the study states.

To close this gap, the study recommends either reducing costs through subsidies such as food stamps and child care assistance, or increasing access to training and education.

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