

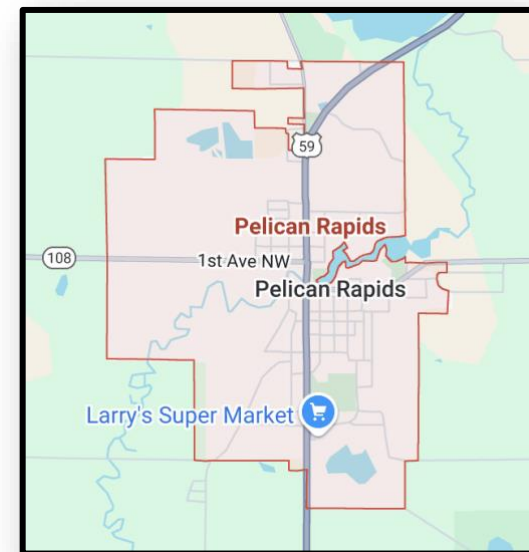
Pelican Rapids

Key Demographics¹

- Pop. 2,577.
- Median Income: \$65,482 (PR) vs. \$85,086 (MN).
- Poverty: 17.1% (PR) vs. 9.3% (MN).
- Racial-ethnic makeup: 48.1% white only; 16.1% Black or African American only; 3.7% Asian; 1.1% American Indian/Alaska Native only; 9.5% 2 or more races; 33.0% Hispanic/Latinx of any race.
- English only is spoken in 72.3% of homes. Spanish speakers make up 15.5% of Pelican Rapids residents; other “Indo-European languages, 3.0%; and other languages, 8.6%.
- Population of residents under age 18: 26.5% (PR) vs. 22.6% (MN).
- Households with children: 37.0% of total households. Of households with children, 73.7% are married couple families, 3.9% are co-habiting, 20.1% are single mother, 0% are single father, 0% are grandparent(s) responsible for kids.

Most Needed Family Support Services in Pelican Rapids (11/8/2024)²

- Otter Express – 25% of Pelican Rapids people have no transportation.
- Transit/transportation.
- School social worker who can do home visiting, help in the home environment.
- All-day wraparound childcare center.



¹ https://data.census.gov/profile/Pelican_Rapids_city_Minnesota?g=160XX00US2750164

² Some suggestions may seem to repeat as an effort was made to record each suggestion as it was stated.

- Community Center.
- Daycares.
- Adult care.
- Free transportation.
- Bus of services to move around.
- Parenting in Jail.
- Social workers in the home.
- Life skills -- “adulthood”.
- Parent centers.

How Services in Pelican Rapids Match Up with Protective Factors³

Protective Factor	Services Available in Pelican Rapids
Parental resilience	Private therapists, mobile crisis response, Community and Life Services, Peer Support, Alcoholics Anonymous.
Social connections	Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary, community events, pool/aquatic center/splash pad, trails, parks, fitness center, American Legion, community garden, Community Education, Public Library, Bookmobile.
Knowledge of parenting and child development	ECFE, family home visiting, preschool screening, Childcare Visitor Program/Bright Start Outreach.
Concrete support in times of need	MAHUBE-OTWA, Otter Express (as of 1/13/25), WIC, thrift stores, clothes closet/free store, food shelf, backpack food program, private dental offices, medical clinics, Apple Tree Dental, chiropractic, massage, Adult Education/ESL, Someplace Safe, City police department, free bike repair, Career Force.
Social and emotional competence of children	School-based mental health; clubs such as: 4H, Future Farmers of America, Scouting; activities such as: dance, music, summer camps, church youth groups, schools; school-age care; afterschool tutoring; ECSE; preschool; Follow-Along Program; Early Head Start; Head Start.

³ This is not a complete or perfect listing of all services available on the ground in Pelican Rapids. Also, an individual service or provider can potentially match multiple protective factors. An effort was made to match the service or provider with the best fit.

Family Resource Centers Focus Group Notes (1/25/2024)

Note: We conducted two focus groups in Pelican Rapids on the same day – one in English and one in Spanish. The English group received heavy participation. The Spanish group attracted only a single participant. Both are listed here.

English Group

1. *Thinking about people you know who are currently parents living in OTC (or from your personal experience) what was the biggest surprise about becoming a parent?*
 - How hard it is to find childcare and how expensive it is.
 - I said I would never raise my children like my parents, then I did.
 - How fast I ran out of sick days.
 - How many germs they bring home – getting sick all the time.
 - How many activities you can't do anymore because they are not kid-friendly and relating to childless people is challenging.
 - How easy the newborn stage is.
 - Sleep deprivation.
 - When they become mobile your whole world changes.
 - How fast life goes by.
 - Balancing life and work and stigma that goes with working outside the home or being a stay-at-home mom.
 - Work is your whole life before kids and after your kids are your main focus.

2. *On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the least and 10 being the most, how stressed out do you think OTC parents are currently?*
 - Closer to a 10.
 - People who are struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues struggle to parent. They don't have the tools.
 - 2, now that my kids are older.
 - Vetting babysitters is hard if they are not from the area.
 - Raising a child now is almost always a 10 because of technology, etc.
 - Isolation – not having a community or a network is hard.
 - Those with family in the area are doing better. If you don't know anybody, and have no networks, it's a lot harder.
 - It's important for parents to have their time alone also, and family can help with watching kids while you do that.
 - During the winter, the stress level is higher because you can't take them anywhere without it costing an arm and a leg. You get a case of "housatosis" – kids can't blow off steam. It's more relaxed in the summer.
 - You can't send kids across the main streets or busy streets to get to the park.
 - The new pool missed its mark – it's not a winter activity.

- Teenagers with mental health challenges – we need to normalize these. As a parent, that is super stressful – could be an 8 from taking on your kid’s stress.
- It’s hard to be a kid these days, and there are limited mental health providers.
- It’s a far drive for resources.
- Food shelves have been used more this year than ever before.
- Rural America is a service desert.
- Some parents support others.

3. *Based on the parents you know and talk to, what are the top sources/types of stress they are facing?*

- Having to leave the community for resources.
- Lack of affordable housing
- A place for kids to go to belong.
- Daycare shortage/affordability
- When they have half days of school...how do you work this out if you work out of town – to get your kids and bring them home in the middle of the day?
- For new arrivals, the barrier of language and understanding our systems vs. their knowledge of raising children/cultural needs.
- Finding belonging and inclusion is difficult
- There is a “good old boy” network in town. If you don’t know people, you’re zip, but you can get a lot of things done otherwise.
- Community: The Structures of Belonging is a good resource.
- Moms have friends to talk to about their kids. Dads wanting to talk about kids too, and this needs to be destigmatized.
- Not having enough leave or sick days, having to go back to work so soon after childbirth.
- Financial burden – you have to go back to work due to this. It’s hard to support a family on a single income.
- Policies like having to use your sick leave first when you’re on maternity leave are challenging.
- There are more expectations on moms.
- The guys can’t always get off work to take care of their kids.
- My husband stayed home once with sick kids because I made more money, and his boss gave him raise to match my hourly pay.
- This is unlikely to change. People get set in their ways.

4. *What are our strengths as an OTC community that support and protect children and their families?*

- The community supports. The whole town comes together when there is a death for example or illness. Emotional support.
- It’s safe here. Crimes, gangs, etc.

- Parks – nice open spaces, lakes, fishing, kids can go unsupervised.
- New bike trail!
- “Free range” kids – people watch out for each other’s kids.
- Library – here and in Fergus Falls. Would like a kids’ space that’s soundproof like they have in Fergus Falls.
- You could stop at any business in town and ask for help, and they would help.
- It’s easy to feel isolated, you have to reach out, but it’s hard to reach out for help.
- I was short a few dollars on my groceries at the beginning of the pandemic when my husband wasn’t working, so I was putting things back that I couldn’t afford. The people at Larry’s helped me get everything my family needed. I am so grateful for the help they provided at that time.

5. *What are some of the existing resources that support and protect children and families? Where are they located?*

- The elementary school is a good resource. Monitoring and protecting, safe space.
- Churches – Grace Church
- ECCE – it’s hard to attend with the mixed ages of kids
- Family and Me
- Community and Life Service – participant emphasized they are open for business.
- MAHUBE-OTWA
- Language barriers and cultural differences can make it easy to miss out.
- How do we advertise services available at various community resources.
- In Fergus Falls they have a “Someplace Safe” which is also opening here in PR
- Viking Boutique
- Food Shelf
- Thrift Shop
- We have 1 therapist and 2 clinics

6. *Thinking about services and supports for children and families, what gaps are there and where in OTC are the gaps located?*

- There is nothing for teens
- Something like Otter Cove or PACC would be nice
- Youth Center is coming – at the old Congregational Church
- Community mental health – THRIVE program encompasses all ages – education to help reduce stigma

- There is a gap between the responsibility of schools and community supports if they are not involved in a sport. There is nothing to do if you're not involved in sports. If you're not sporty, you're not in the spotlight – there are cliques. Kids need adult mentorship and role models regardless.
- What is the lever within the community to step up and support our families? People can fall through the cracks. Where can adults step up for young people?
- Peer support is the biggest gap – need 18 mo. Sobriety in order to work as a Peer.
- 20-30% of our community doesn't have transportation (none)
- Otter Express is a joke – it doesn't really serve PR
- Constantly helping others with rides. Could use transportation based in PR.
- A lot of houses don't have adequate furniture. Beds, etc.
- Furniture mission is an idea that we are working on.
- Network (confidential; no paperwork) for sharing resources – reduces the burden on families trying to get help if you reduce or eliminate paperwork.
- There is a lack of advertisement or communication about available resources.

7. *What can we do to increase support to children and their families?*

- Funding for increased supports. You can't expand services without funding. You have to pay someone to be there to help navigate things.
- More opportunities for volunteering for teenagers. The teen center may be having this.
- Internships – opportunities to build leadership skills. Some of these are selective.
- Raise funds, like a community bake sale.
- More “community-ness”
- Reduce the barriers we impose to access services
- We have access to interpreting, but we need in person interpreters.
- We have opportunities to bring other perspectives into decision-making spaces. We can do better.
- We should get input from youth and teens.
- Advertising – the community doesn't know what's going on.
- Word of mouth and social media.
- Mentorship of existing families and new community members
- “Welcome to Fergus Falls” type program to help people feel welcome to PR.
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8. *Is there anything we didn't ask that you want us to know about families and children in OTC?*

- There are quite a few things happening behind the scenes. Bringing those programs and people to the table – if you are going to do something – is important. You have to be careful not to step on peoples' toes.
- So much progress is already taking place, jump on the wagon.
- Somali community connections.
- Young people are a great resource.
- Youth group and teens.
- We need a central place to share resources.
- Expanding supports and mentorship beyond sports and “homeowners”
- Need for transportation and local activities.

Spanish Group

1. *Thinking about people you know who are currently parents living in OTC (or from your personal experience) what was the biggest surprise about becoming a parent?*

- There is no childcare center
- Some place to take care of kids, up until now there is nobody to take care of kids.
- Nothing in English or in Spanish – for younger children.
- With my youngest I worked nights and had to watch him during the day.
- Now my daughter is going through the same thing, trying to get my granddaughter into preschool
- Family needs to care for kids

2. *On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the least and 10 being the most, how stressed out do you think OTC parents are currently?*

- Stressful - 10
- As an example, I have a friend who works at the turkey plant and is going through a tough time. She doesn't have anybody to take care of her kids, she is taking care of nieces and nephews also. Her brother-in-law has a baby in the hospital in Rochester, so she is taking care of the other kids while he is down there. Her oldest daughter skips school to take care of the kids when there are no other options.
- We could use more housing, apartments, a lot of families are doubled up. A lot of people are arriving. We need more housing.
- It's more stressful for recent arrivals. They have no English, no driver's license, no place to live. They are typically living amongst big family groups.

3. *Based on the parents you know and talk to, what are the top sources/types of stress they are facing?*
 - It goes back to who is going to take care of your kids.
 - There are some people who are stressed from the outset trying to find work. How are we going to feed our kids?

4. *What are our strengths as an OTC community that support and protect children and their families?*
 - I love the summer weather!
 - It's a quiet town to raise kids in.
 - It's a small town and kids can be "free range", and we know they are safe because they are just here in Pelican.
 - My son likes the swimming pool. It is going to be built at some point here in town.

5. *What are some of the existing resources that support and protect children and families? Where are they located?*
 - Usually, friends or neighbors.
 - Churches, food shelf.
 - English is so hard to learn.
 - If I can find the opportunity to learn English I will take it, because the life of an immigrant is work, work, work.
 - As parents we come last.
 - I'm in the category where I can't work because I hurt my back. I haven't worked for 3 months. What classes can I take while I am recuperating?
 - My husband works and we get by with less. Once a month, I go to the food shelf.
 - My husband works at the turkey plant, and he is the only income, but he has limited hours because there is not enough work. He has some heart problems as well. It's a stressful situation. I try to keep his spirits up. It's easy to get down. We have lots of expenses: car, utilities, rent.
 - We have health insurance through the turkey plant.
 - The Pelican Rapids Library is a resource. I'm very grateful. When I became a citizen, they helped me. I am very grateful.

6. *Thinking about services and supports for children and families, what gaps are there and where in OTC are the gaps located?*
 - People who are working aren't able to take advantage of the resources.
 - I'm grateful that I can work and that there are supports for those who can't work.
 - The one I know about is the Food Shelf. I would use it more if allowed. We have large family, doesn't go very far. As long as we have rice and beans, we can survive.

7. *What can we do to increase support to children and their families?*

- Activities in the library in the afternoon for parents and kids -- for parents and kids together in that space in that activity.
- Technology is really getting in the way, for parents, and for kids.
- Moms' groups, some opportunity for moms to come together with those kids and take advantage of activities together.
- We know there are activities at the school but it's difficult to access them due to the cost. If you sign up for basketball and volleyball, it's not just the cost but the time.
- To this day they talk about it (adult children) that we couldn't afford to put them in sports. It breaks your heart.
- My daughter is a single mother, my grandson is 5, but the only people she has are me and my husband. He is such a cutie saying, "I am going to be a fighter." We give her a lot of support and help and she understands better now why it is so difficult.

8. *Is there anything we didn't ask that you want us to know about families and children in OTC?*

- Nada.