

2007 Community Needs Assessment FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Schuylkill Community Action (SCA), a private non-profit Community Action Agency, conducts the 2007 Community Needs Assessment in accordance with agency planning efforts. The Assessment is SCA's effort to report on the needs and resources for low-income persons, social/human service providers, stakeholders, and the general community.

Assessing the needs of our local community, specifically Schuylkill County, is essential to coordinating, planning, and providing a variety of social programs and services. Identifying problems and issues that extend beyond poverty rates and general demographics is crucial to determining the services and programs that meet the needs of all people.

The 2007 Assessment included three components: web-based surveys (surveys designed to elicit feedback from clients, service providers, key stakeholders, and the general community), a Poverty Forum, and analysis of existing community data. The Poverty Forum elicited information from a wide range of community residents, public officials, and service provider's concerning community needs and issues via group discussion.

Schuylkill Community Action's **2007 Community Needs Assessment** serves as the basis for the organization's planning efforts. The document contains primary data collected through surveys as well as discussion forums, and includes secondary data collected from a variety of local, state, and national resources. The report may be utilized as a reference tool by other interested parties. However, Schuylkill Community Action requests the user of the report include the following citation in any materials referencing the report: *2007 Community Needs Assessment—Final Report*. Report prepared by Schuylkill Community Action. March 2008.

FINDINGS SUMMARY

Survey Respondents

SCA surveyed each of the following samples for specific needs assessment purposes. A total of 1,529 surveys were completed.

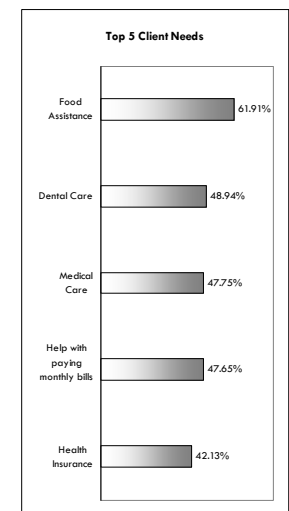
- 22 local human and social service administrators completed the Service Provider Survey
- 44 various community leaders participated in the Stakeholder Survey
- 375 citizens completed the Community Survey
- 1,088 clients, primary SCA clients, participated in the Client Survey

Client Survey - Respondent Demographics

- The average client respondent is female, white, ranging in age from 24 to 44 years, a high school graduate, and residing in Schuylkill County for more than 15 years.
- Clients are either single (32%) or married (28%), earning wages or receiving governmental assistance, and living on a gross household income of over \$1,001 per month.
- The majority of clients reside in a household of four or more people; half of all clients reside with children, and most rent their homes.

Client Survey - Key Findings

- Most clients are informed of services available by word of mouth or through the newspaper.
- Clients most frequently turn to family and/or friends for help.
- Not eligible/do not qualify for assistance is the most frequently selected *barrier to obtaining services*.
- Other significant barriers cited by clients include cannot afford fees or costs, "other", and not sure of guidelines/rules of eligibility.
- Food Assistance is the most frequently identified need.
- Dental care, medical care, help with paying monthly bills, health insurance, higher paying job/better wages, home



weatherization/repair, clothing, and employer benefits are among the top ten (10) needs most frequently identified by clients.

Community Survey - Key Findings

- Higher paying jobs/better wages is considered the *most important* need.
- Health insurance, employment/jobs, medical care, and shelter are among the top five (5) needs identified as *most important* to the community.
- Overall, the *quality of various services* is considered average.
- The services receiving the most significant *poor* ratings include parenting education, youth programs, substance abuse treatment and prevention, and public transportation.
- Not aware of programs or services in Schuylkill County is the most frequently selected *barrier to obtaining services*.
- Other significant barriers include not eligible/do not qualify for assistance and cannot afford fees or costs.

Community Stakeholders – Key Findings

- Employment/jobs are considered the *most important* need.
- Health insurance, higher paying jobs/better wages, medical care, and Youth/teen drug and alcohol addiction prevention/treatment are among the top five (5) needs identified as *most important* to stakeholders.
- Overall, the *quality of various services* is considered average.
- The services receiving the most significant *poor* ratings include medical services, parenting education, and youth programs.
- Not aware of programs or services in Schuylkill County is the most frequently selected *barrier to obtaining services*.
- Other significant barriers include no transportation/too-far distance to travel and not eligible/do not qualify for assistance.

Service Provider Survey - Key Findings

- Reliable transportation is considered the *most important* need.
- Service providers consider medical care, health insurance, shelter, safe and decent housing, and dental care as equally important to the community.
- Overall, the *quality of various services* is considered average.

- The services receiving the most significant *poor* ratings include: dental, public transportation, and parenting education.
- No transportation/too far distance to travel is the most frequently selected *barrier to obtaining services*.
- Other significant barriers include not aware of programs or services in Schuylkill County and not eligible/do not qualify for assistance.

Poverty Forum - Key Findings

A total of 90 people participated in the Poverty Forum. Participants included service providers, local officials, members of the faith community, low-income individuals, and a variety of other groups.

- Forum participants identified education, individual issues, health, employment, and transportation as primary concerns and key issues regarding poverty in Schuylkill County.
- Forum participants cited individuals in poverty, education, community views, lack of programs, and services, as barriers to reducing/eliminating poverty.
- Local agencies, organizations and services, education, and community perspectives were noted as local strengths and resources for change.
- Forum participants recommended program and service development, outreach and advocacy, networking, and education – as action steps/solutions to dealing with poverty on a local level.

Existing Community Data - Key Findings

Population ¹

- The overall population is declining.
- Death rates are the primary component for population change.
- The population age 85 and older will continue to increase.
- The County's percentage of people age 65 and older exceeds state rates.
- The number of single female-headed households is continuing to rise.

Self-Sufficiency ²

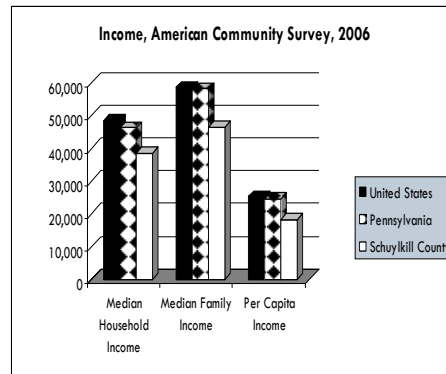
- In order to be self sufficient, a single parent family with one infant must earn at least \$10.18 an hour. The current minimum wage is \$7.15.

Employment and Industry³

- Unemployment rates are higher than state rates, and follow state trends.
- Management of companies/enterprises and the utilities industry provide the highest weekly wages.

Income and Poverty⁴

- The County's median household, family, and per capita income is below state and national medians.
- It is estimated the poverty rates will continue to rise in Schuylkill County.
- Of all persons in poverty, rates are highest for children under five and person's age 75 years and older.
- Of all families in poverty, single female-headed households are most likely to be in poverty.
- The percent of children considered low income (below 200% of the federal poverty level) is considerably higher than that of state percentages.
- Persons with some high school education but no diploma had the highest rate of poverty in Schuylkill County.
- The number of people receiving Medical Assistance, (MA) Food Stamps, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) assistance has increased.
- Renter-occupied households in Schuylkill County are more than three times as likely to be in poverty as owner-occupied households.

**Education**⁵

- Enrollment in public, private, and Nonpublic schools is declining.
- The number of children receiving early intervention services in Schuylkill County is increasing.
- Schuylkill County ranked 5th among Pennsylvania counties in terms of the percentage of its population with some high school but no degree.

Housing⁶

- The County's vacancy rate of 10.7 in 2000 exceeds both state and national rates.

- Schuylkill County's homeownership rate is higher than state and national averages. However, rental rates are below state and national rates.
- 20% of owner-occupied units and 43% of renter-occupied units are utilizing more than 30% of their income on housing costs and can be considered *cost burdened*.
- The Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$516. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$1,720 monthly or \$20,640 annually.
- An estimated 28.3 percent of renters and 19.3 percent of homeowners had 7 housing problems in 2000, meaning a cost burden greater than 30% of income, and/or overcrowding, and/or the unit lacked complete kitchen or plumbing facilities.
- 30% to 35% of mortgages originated in 2006 were subprime mortgages
- The County's housing stock is extremely antiquated; over half were built prior to 1939 (average age of homes is estimated to be 69 years).

Youth⁷

- 39 percent of grandparents living in households with one or more grandchildren under 18 are responsible for grandchildren.
- The number of delinquency dispositions is increasing.
- The pregnancy rate for youth ages 15 to 19 years decreased from 217 in 1999 to 168 in 2002. However, the rate appears to be increasing from 150 in 2004 to 170 in 2005.

Crime⁸

- State correctional facility and county jail reports show that overcrowding in those prisons is a problem.
- During the period 2005-2007, the most prevalent type of crime is property offenses. The number of criminal homicides, arsons, and drug violations increased during this timeframe.
- Between 2000 and 2004, the number of new criminal cases received increased.

Nutrition⁹

- The number of Schuylkill County students eligible for free lunches at area school districts is increasing, the number of students eligible for reduced lunch declined.

- From 2000 to 2003, the number of Food Stamp recipients increased by 29.2%, while the number statewide increased by 23.9%.

Health ¹⁰

- 16 areas of Schuylkill County have been designation as Medically Underserved Areas (MUA).
- The low-income population of Schuylkill County is designated as a population group of which there is a shortage of dental health providers.
- The percentage of persons eligible for medical assistance has continued to increase since 2003.
- It is estimated that nearly 9% of the population (12,663 people of all ages) is uninsured.
- Birth rates in Schuylkill are lagging behind the state rate.
- Overall, maternal health in Schuylkill County is better than state averages.
- Schuylkill County’s death rate for all causes is 959.6, which exceeds state (851.6) and national (798.8) rates. The County’s death rates for cardiovascular disease, diseases of the heart, motor vehicle accidents, and suicide are higher than state and national rates.
- The rate of suicide has continually surpassed average statewide rates.

Death Rate by Disease	Schuylkill County	Pennsylvania	United States
cardiovascular	367.4	306.9	276.4
diseases of the heart	298.3	237.6	210.3
motor vehicle accidents	22.5	12.6	15.1
suicide	17.8	10.8	10.6

Transportation ¹¹

- Vehicles are more readily available to homeowners than renters.
- More than 92 percent of workers 16 years and over used a car, truck, or van to get to work.
- Workflow data show that the largest number of Schuylkill County residents, more than 43,000, stayed within the county to work.
- The STS Fixed Route Bus System operates Monday to Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Saturday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. No bus service is provided on Sundays, and there is no service on certain holidays.

SURVEY, POVERTY FORUM, AND EXISTING DATA – COMPARISON OF KEY FINDINGS

NEEDS Analysis

- Overall, the need most identified by clients, the community, key stakeholders, and service providers is within the realm of healthcare (health insurance and medical care).
- Health and employment issues were also identified by the Poverty Forum participants as factors related to poverty.
- Existing data shows that 9% of County residents are uninsured, and that the County’s unemployment rate is consistently higher than the state rate. In addition, Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, shows that 16 areas of Schuylkill County have been designation as Medically Underserved Areas (MUA). A MUA is an area in which residents have a shortage of personal health services.
- Community and Stakeholder respondents identify economic needs as the primary need among residents of Schuylkill County. Data shows that Schuylkill County’s median household income is below that of the state and national median.

BARRIERS TO SERVICES Analysis

- Key stakeholders and the community identify awareness as a barrier for people to obtain needed services.
- Regarding transportation as a barrier, one public transportation agency exists in Schuylkill County. The Fixed Route Bus System operates Monday to Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Saturday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, no bus service is provided on Sundays.
- Clients identified eligibility as a barrier, which relates to the gap in program services due to various eligibility guidelines (e.g. a family of four earns an annual income slightly over the guideline for food assistance is deemed ineligible, although the family may not be living on a self-sufficient wage).

- Poverty Forum participants identified transportation as a concern for people in poverty.

ADEQUACY OF SERVICES

Analysis

- The majority of Community, Stakeholder, and Service Provider survey respondents rate local social/human services as average.
- Services/programs relating to parenting education received poor ratings from each category of survey respondent.
- Poverty Forum participants identified the lack of programs, services, and funding as a barriers to reducing/eliminating poverty.

COMMUNITY SERVICES, PROVISION OF SERVICES, AND COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Analysis

- Community Stakeholders and Services Providers *somewhat disagree* that programs reach all who need them, and that services are easily accessible.
- Stakeholders *somewhat agree* that people face barriers to services, while Service Providers indicated that they *somewhat disagree* with this statement.
- Poverty Forum participants also cited the number of local agencies and organizations as a strength and a resource to combating poverty locally. However, the Forum participants also recommended that changes in the extent to which agencies and other organizations work together must occur in order to combat poverty locally.
- Poverty Forum participants also cited the community’s perspective and views on poverty as a barrier to addressing poverty.

Data Sources

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7/1/2006 County Characteristics Resident Population Estimates File for Internet Display
Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau Release Date: August 9, 2007
USA Counties, <http://censtats.census.gov>

2 The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Pennsylvania, 2006 Diana Pearce, Wider Opportunities for Women, and PathwaysPA

PA Dept. of Labor & Industry

3 Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Research and Statistics
Pa Dept. of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Analysis

4 Census 2000
2006 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau
Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Prepared by The Pennsylvania State Data Center
Selected Demographic Characteristics of Schuylkill County, Prepared by the Pennsylvania State Data Center, July 5, 2007
CLIKS (Community Level Information on Kids), KIDS Count, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, Census 2000 Data
Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Income Maintenance, and the Department of Health

5 Pennsylvania Department of Education
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (*PaTTAN*)
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 Schuylkill Transportation System, Website

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- **Ashland Public Library, Minersville Public Library, Schuylkill Haven Free Public Library, Shenandoah Area Free Public Library, Tower-Porter Community Library**, for serving as local Community Survey sites.
- **Schuylkill Community Action Board of Directors** and **Staff** for their time and support during the Assessment Planning Process, the agency Strategic Planning Process, and the facilitation of the Client Surveys.



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