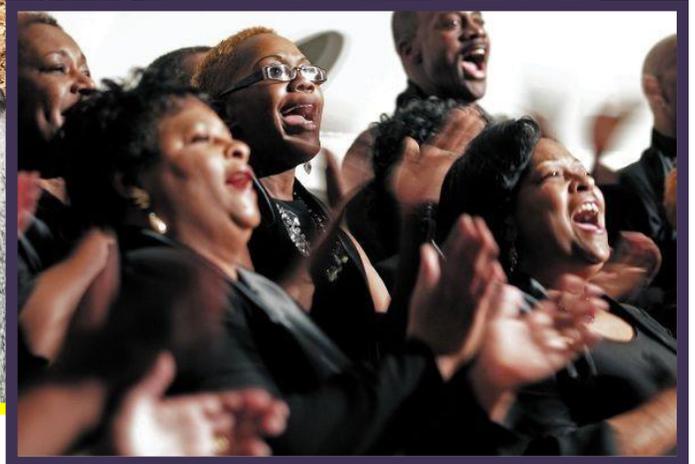




City of
Tacoma

2012 Community Data Report



May 2012

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Executive Summary

Community Profile

The City of Tacoma, located in Pierce County, is the third largest city in Washington State with 198,397 residents.¹ The city faces many challenges in meeting the needs of its residents. The percent of Tacoma residents living below the federal poverty level is 17.1% compared to 12.1% statewide, and the median household income is nearly \$10,000 less than the statewide median income (\$47,862 to \$57,244 respectively).¹ Sixty (60) percent of Tacoma Public School students receive free or reduced lunch and only slightly over half will graduate from high school on time (55.3%, Class of 2010).² On any given night, there are 1,997 homeless adults and children in Tacoma & Pierce County³. Tacoma residents continue to experience slightly higher rates of unemployment, with 9.3% unemployed in January 2012 compared to 9.0% statewide.⁴

To help address these critical community needs, the City of Tacoma 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan identified three strategic priority areas:

- Prepare Children & Youth for Success
- Increase Employability & Self-Sufficiency for Adults
- Meet Basic Needs of Tacoma Residents

Community Survey Key Findings

In April 2012, the city solicited feedback from human services providers and other community funders to assess the progress made in the strategic priority areas since the plan's implementation in 2010. Below are the results of the survey in the three areas.

- **63%** of survey participants agreed that the community has made improvements in preparing children and youth for success.
- **42%** of survey participants agreed that the community has made improvements in increasing employability and self-sufficiency for adults, and

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

² Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2010-2011 Tacoma School District Report Card

³ 2012 Homeless Count, Pierce County Community Connections

⁴ Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch, Resident Civilian Labor Force and Employment in Tacoma PMSA (Pierce County)

- **34%** of survey participants agreed that the community has made improvements in meeting the basic needs of Tacoma residents.

The survey also solicited feedback on the effectiveness and level of importance of the city's roles identified in the 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan to help build a human services system capable of addressing community needs. The information collected helped identify the city's areas of strength, as well as opportunities for growth in roles identified by participants as high priority. A complete list of strengths and opportunities for growth can be found on page 15 of the full report.

Areas of Strength:

- ❖ Provide funding to service providers
- ❖ Advocate for equity, justice, and human rights
- ❖ Consider both system and program outcomes
- ❖ Engage stakeholders in designing services
- ❖ Set expectations and demonstrate cultural competence

Opportunities for Growth:

- ❖ Develop comprehensive responses to big problems
- ❖ Increase availability of resources (monetary and nonmonetary)

The final section of the survey helped identify emerging community needs. Survey participants were asked to identify five (5) unmet needs of low-income individuals they serve in the community, and rank the needs in order of importance.

Top 5 Unmet Community Needs:

1. Educational & Employment Services for Youth & Adults
2. Transportation
3. Affordable Housing
4. Services & Housing for Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults
5. Greater Access to Mental Health Care & Medical Care

The city has already begun to independently identify and meet these emerging needs by enacting a Mental Health Sales Tax and including an emergency youth stabilization services strategic priority in the 2012-13 Community Development Block Grant process, but should continue to explore expanded strategies in 2013-2014 and possibly beyond.

Introduction

The 2012 Community Data Report informs the mid-point review of the 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan (HSSP), which was adopted in June, 2010. The report includes an overview of the city's existing human services strategies, current Tacoma demographic information, community provider feedback, and identification of emerging community needs.

Methodology

Historically, the city has utilized secondary data sources to identify community human services needs and has not engaged in the direct solicitation of resident feedback. The practice continued for the purpose of the mid-point review; however, a wide range of community service providers and funders were surveyed in order to evaluate the City of Tacoma's leadership role and the importance of existing strategies and priorities in light of the current social, political, and economic environment. Qualitative methods, such as open-ended questions, created opportunities for participants to describe critically unmet needs in the community while elaborating on possible solutions.

Survey Participants

In April 2012, the survey was distributed to two hundred and thirty-five (235) human services providers and funders in the community. There was a response rate of 27%, with sixty-four (64) providers and/or funders completing the survey. Participants received a consent form explicating the reason for the survey: "to assess the relevance of the City of Tacoma's 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic plan and to identify the top five critically unmet needs in the community." Participants were assured that no personally identifying information would be collected since many are currently funded by the City of Tacoma and may not fully disclose feedback without the guarantee of anonymity.

The majority of participants (92%, n=59) work for organizations that have been in operation for more than 10 years, and primarily serve Tacoma residents (73%, n=47). Most were familiar with the City of Tacoma's Human Services Strategic Plan (61%, n=39) and have received funding in the past from the City of Tacoma. Lastly, almost half of participants indicated that their organization has collaborated with the City of Tacoma's Human Rights and Human Services Department in the past two years (47%, n=30).

Table 1 below identifies the various categories of service providers that completed the survey. The service categories were identified by the City of Tacoma Human Rights & Human Services Department. An unusually high amount of participants (22%, n=14) selected “other.” In most cases, this was due to the organization performing two or more functions, hence not fitting into one distinct service category.

Table 1 Organizational Profile

Service Categories	Frequency	%
Emergency Services	5	8%
Supportive Housing	10	16%
Crime & Violence Prevention	4	6%
Youth Development	11	17%
Health/Mental Health	7	11%
Community Development	4	6%
Economic Development	0	0%
Specialized Services	4	6%
Funder	5	8%
Other	14	22%
TOTAL	64	100%

2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan

The 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan identifies the City's role in human services, describes the City's priorities for allocation of resources and sets out strategies the City will pursue in human services over the next four years.

The 2010 plan was developed in the context of continuing and new trends that influence the type and extent of needs in the community, as well as the resources available to meet those needs. It was developed in consultation with human service providers, interested citizens, community leaders and City staff in a broadly consultative process that included focus groups, interviews and a Community Panel that considered and made recommendations based on community input. The 2010 update of the City of Tacoma's Human Services Strategic Plan is the fourth update since the development of the original plan in 1994. City Council reviewed and adopted the plan on June 29, 2010. A full version of the plan can be found at: <http://cms.cityoftacoma.org/hrhs/hspc/2010-2014-HSSP.pdf>.

Community Trends

In May 2010, The Human Rights and Human Services Department convened four meetings with 78 participants, made up of representatives from human services agencies and interested community members. With contributions from the Mayor, Tacoma City Council and Human Rights and Human Services Department staff, participants in the planning process identified a number of trends affecting human services. Several themes emerged:

- The demand for services has increased in both the number of persons needing service and the complexity of their needs.
- Many people have difficulty finding appropriate services when they need them, which might be due to lack of service availability, lack of knowledge of services, or lack of culturally appropriate access.
- Meeting the service needs of a highly diverse population is increasingly challenging.
- Administrative and reporting burdens impinge on the capacity to deliver services.

City Roles

The City fills a number of important roles and is engaged in a number of strategies to address the needs identified in this plan. Funding is a critical component, but the City also exercises leadership in specific areas and promotes systems development, which can increase the capacity of others to achieve the goals of the City and the community.

The City's roles identified in the plan include:

Leadership

- Develop comprehensive responses to big problems
- Increase availability of resources (monetary and nonmonetary)
- Increase community capacity to respond
- Publicize positive impact of human services
- Set expectation and demonstrate cultural competence
- Advocate for equity, justice, and human rights
- Engage stakeholders in designing services

System Development

- Increase service effectiveness and impact
- Facilitate collaboration (break down silos)
- Work with regional partners
- Leverage funding to increase effect
- Link essential services
- Consider both system and program outcomes

Direct Service Provision

- Increase access to quality services
- Increase parent/caregiver capacity

Funding of Services

- Provide technical assistance to increase organizational capacity
- Increase cultural competency in human services organizations
- Provide funding to service providers

Strategic Priorities

Three strategic priority areas were established in the 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan to direct the city's investments in human/technical resources and funding. The strategic priority areas continued from the previous plan, but additional goals were identified under each priority to further clarify the city's focus in human services. Table 2 on the following page outlines how these priorities and goals align with the city's roles.

Table 2: Alignment of Strategic Priorities/Goals & City Roles

PRIORITIES AND GOALS	Leadership	System Development	Direct Services	Funding
PREPARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR SUCCESS	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Parents/caregivers have skills to provide quality environments for children	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Barriers to academic success are reduced so students graduate with competence and confidence	✓	✓		✓
• Adults who work with children have skills to recognize, intervene in and reduce the effects of childhood trauma		✓		
• Youth involved in designing effective alternatives to violence	✓	✓		
• Youth violence is prevented/reduced	✓	✓		✓
INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR ADULTS	✓	✓	✓	✓
• People are capable of earning a family/living wage	✓	✓		
• Employment is not hindered by cultural/racial diversity		✓		
• More adults complete training/education programs	✓			✓
• People are able to live as independently as possible			✓	✓
• Residents are positively engaged in the community		✓		✓
MEET BASIC NEEDS OF TACOMA RESIDENTS	✓	✓		✓
• Prevention of and pathways out of homelessness are available	✓	✓		✓
• Residents have access to nutritious food year-round				✓
• Residents have access to medical, dental, & behavioral health services	✓			
• Secure, permanent housing is available for those in need		✓		
• Interpersonal violence/abuse is reduced	✓	✓		✓
• Neighborhoods are safe and free of blight	✓	✓		
• Substandard housing reduced/affordable housing increased		✓		

City of Tacoma: Community Profile

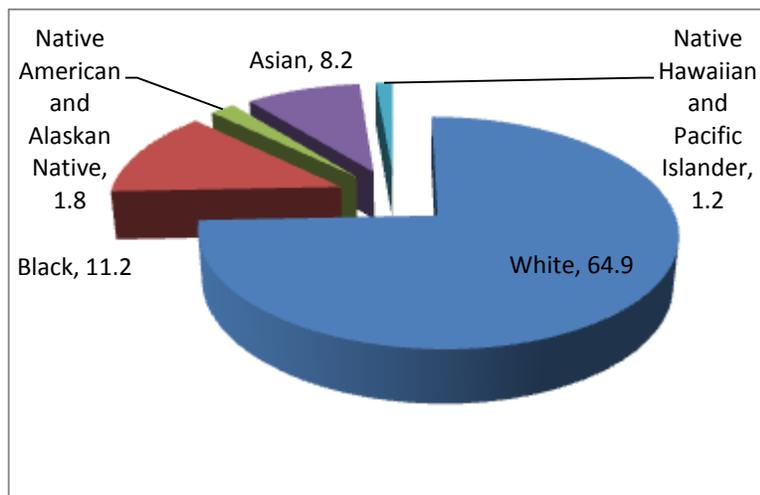
This section includes a brief community profile of Tacoma and its residents to provide context on the human services needs faced by the city, including community composition, economic conditions, and primary and secondary education institutions.

Tacoma Demographics

The City of Tacoma is a mid-sized urban port city located in Pierce County, Washington. The population of Tacoma is 198,397 residents⁵, which makes it the second most populated city in the Puget Sound area and the third most populated in the state.

The composition of Tacoma residents is diverse. As Table 3 below shows, 64.9% of residents identify themselves as White, 11.2% identify as Black, 8.2% identify as Asian, 1.8% identify as Native American and Alaskan Native, and 1.2% identify as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander⁵.

Table 3: Racial Demographics⁵



In the ethnicity category, 11.3% identify as Hispanic or Latino and 88.7% identify as not Hispanic or Latino⁵. A language other than English is spoken in 18.4% of Tacoma homes, which is slightly higher than the statewide percentage of 17.5%, and 12.7% were born outside the U.S.⁵

The majority of Tacoma residents are adults (65.7%), between the ages of 18-64. Seniors age 65 and over comprise 11.3% and youth under age 18 comprise the remaining 23% of the city's population.⁵

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, the composition of Tacoma is shaped by the other factors such as the ones identified in the list below.

About Tacoma's Residents⁶	Tacoma	Washington
Population, percent change, 2000 to 2010	2.5%	14.1%
Female persons, percent, 2010	50.6%	50.2%
Living in same house 1 year & over, 2006-2010	77.9%	81.7%
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2006-2010	87.3%	89.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2006-2010	23.7%	31.0%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2006-2010	24.9	25.4
Housing units, 2010	85,786	2,885,677
Homeownership rate, 2006-2010	54.1%	64.8%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2006-2010	35.5%	25.9%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2006-2010	\$241,300	\$285,400
Households, 2006-2010	80,003	2,577,375
Persons per household, 2006-2010	2.40	2.49
Per capita money income in past 12 mo (2010 dollars) 2006-2010	\$25,377	\$29,733
Median household income 2006-2010	\$47,862	\$57,244
Persons below poverty level, percent, 2006-2010	17.1%	12.1%

There was significantly less growth in the population of Tacoma between 2000 and 2010 (2.5% increase) when compared to statewide growth (14.1% increase). Almost 78% of Tacoma residents are stable in their housing, as defined by maintained residence in the same location for one year or greater. Most strikingly, the median income for Tacoma residents when compared to the statewide median income is almost \$10,000/year lower (\$47,862 and \$57,244 respectively), and 17.1% of Tacoma residents are below the poverty level. This is nearly 5% higher than the state average of 12.1%.

Economic Conditions

Tacoma serves as a major business center for the South Sound Region and is home to the largest port in Washington State. Revitalization efforts in downtown Tacoma have led to the addition of the University of Washington-Tacoma campus, the State's first electric light rail, and the largest number of museums per square mile in Washington.

An economic setback for the city occurred in September 2009 when Russell Investments, which had been located in downtown Tacoma since its beginning in 1936, announced it was moving its headquarters to Seattle along with several hundred white-collar jobs. This, coupled with a

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and 2010 American Community Survey

national economic recession, has lead Tacoma to experience a slightly higher unemployment rate than the statewide average. In January 2012, 9.3% of Pierce County (including Tacoma) residents were unemployed compared to a statewide average of 9.0% unemployment.⁷

The unemployment rate is much lower when compared to the 2010 rate, which peaked at slightly over 11%. The decrease does seem to indicate an improvement in the general economic climate. However, rates are still higher than before the economic downturn took hold in late 2008. Bankruptcies are also decreasing in Tacoma, with a 4.6% decrease in 2011 compared to the year before⁸. It was the first year since 2006 that the percentage decreased.

Primary, Secondary & Post-Secondary Educational Institutions

The Tacoma School District serves approximately 28,000 Tacoma youth and includes 36 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 5 high schools, 1 alternative high school, a science and math Institute (SAMI), and 1 school of the arts (SOTA). Compared to statewide public school students, the Tacoma student body statistically comes from households with less income and education. For example, 60% of Tacoma School District students receive free or reduced lunch when the state average is 43.7%.⁹ Additionally, Tacoma School District's dropout rate is 9.3% compared to the state average of 4.6%, and the on-time graduation rate of Tacoma students in Class of 2010 was 55.3%.⁹

The student body is more racially and ethnically diverse, with less than half of students identifying as White (45.4%).⁹ The largest minority groups include Black (18.2%), Hispanic (14.5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (12.2%) and Asian (10.2%).⁹

Tacoma's institutions of higher learning include the University of Washington – Tacoma Campus, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma Community College, City University of Seattle-Tacoma, Bates Technical College, The Evergreen State College - Tacoma Campus, and Corban University School of Ministry/Tacoma Campus. Pacific Lutheran University, Clover Park Technical College and Pierce College are located in the surrounding communities of Lakewood and Parkland respectively.

⁷ Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch, Resident Civilian Labor Force and Employment in Tacoma PMSA (Pierce County)

⁸ US Bankruptcy Court; Western Washington Division

⁹ Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2010-2011 Tacoma School District Report Card

Community Survey Results

The results of the April 2012 survey were grouped into three categories: Evaluation of Strategic Priorities, Effectiveness and Importance of City Roles, and Critical Community Needs.

Evaluation of Strategic Priorities

The survey asked participants to rank their level of agreement regarding community improvements in the human services strategic priority areas listed in Table 2 (page 9). The strongly agree and agree results were combined and represented as *agree*, and the strongly disagree and disagree categories were tabulated in the same fashion and represented as *disagree*. A rating of *neutral* represents participants who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Table 3: Rating of Strategic Priorities

City of Tacoma Human Services Strategic Priorities	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Our community has made improvements in preparing children and youth for success.	63%	11%	27%
Our community has made improvements in increasing employability and self-sufficiency for adults.	42%	20%	38%
Our community has made improvements in meeting the basic needs of Tacoma residents.	34%	22%	44%

Survey results indicate the community has made the most improvement in the area of preparing children & youth for success, with 63% of participants agreeing with the statement. Several efforts supported by the city since the plan's adoption in June 2010 could be associated with the progress, including support of Tacoma 360, First Five Fundamentals and the Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. The city also provides direct service provision in this area with its operation of the Child Care Resource & Referral Program.

Less than half (42%) of survey participants agreed the community is making progress in increasing employability and self-sufficiency for adults, and only a third (34%) of participants agreed progress is being made in meeting the basic needs of Tacoma residents. It should be noted that there were a higher number of participants selecting neutral in these categories (38% and 44%) when compared to preparing children and youth for success category (27%).

Effectiveness and Importance of City Roles

This section of the survey asked participants to rate the City of Tacoma's effectiveness in key roles identified in the 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan, as well as the importance of each role. The results were also grouped into three categories: *agree*, *disagree* and *neutral*.

Table 4: Role Effectiveness and Importance

Role of The City	Is the City of Tacoma effective in the key roles listed?			Is the role important/not important in the current climate?		
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Important	Not Important	Neutral
Develop comprehensive responses to big problems	39%	16%	45%	87%	3%	10%
Increase availability of resources	47%	23%	30%	81%	8%	11%
Increase community capacity to respond	45%	11%	44%	87%	3%	10%
Publicize positive impact of human services	41%	25%	34%	59%	19%	22%
Set expectations and demonstrate cultural competence	52%	16%	33%	70%	6%	24%
Advocate for equity, justice, and human rights	64%	9%	27%	76%	6%	17%
Engage stakeholders in designing services	55%	8%	38%	83%	6%	11%
Increase service effectiveness and impact	48%	11%	41%	83%	2%	16%
Facilitate collaboration (break down silos)	39%	13%	48%	78%	8%	14%
Work with regional partners	39%	14%	47%	76%	11%	13%
Leverage funding to increase effect	44%	16%	41%	89%	2%	10%
Link essential services	47%	11%	42%	87%	3%	10%
Consider both system and program outcomes	59%	8%	33%	83%	6%	11%
Increase access to quality services	44%	14%	42%	89%	3%	8%
Increase parent/caregiver capacity	25%	8%	67%	65%	6%	29%
Provide technical assistance to increase organizational capacity	42%	11%	47%	56%	11%	33%
Increase cultural competency in human service organizations	36%	13%	52%	60%	10%	30%
Provide funding to service providers	65%	15%	20%	92%	3%	5%

The results show a wide range of effectiveness and importance in the selected roles. For the purposes of this analysis, areas with an agreement level of more than 50% were considered strengths and ones with less than 40% agreement and/or more than 20% disagreement were considered opportunities for growth. Those include:

Areas of Strength

- Provide funding to service providers (65% agree)
- Advocate for equity, justice, and human rights (64% agree)
- Consider both system and program outcomes (59% agree)
- Engage stakeholders in designing services (55% agree)
- Set expectations and demonstrate cultural competence (52% agree)

Opportunities for Growth

- Develop comprehensive responses to big problems (39% agree)
- Facilitate collaboration – break down silos (39% agree)
- Work with regional partners (39% agree)
- Increase cultural competency in human services organizations (36% agree)
- Increase parent/caregiver capacity (25% agree)
- Increase availability of resources (23% disagree)
- Publicize positive impact of human services (25% disagree)

When compared to the level of importance however, the only areas with a high level of importance (80% or above) were:

- ***Develop comprehensive responses to big problems*** - 87%
- ***Increase availability of resources (monetary and nonmonetary)*** - 81%

These roles could be prioritized by the city for additional focus in 2013-2014 to increase the level of effectiveness. Additionally, the relationship between the progress in the priority areas and the city's roles of leadership, system development, direct service provision and funding could be further evaluated to determine whether particular strategies and/or a combination of strategies are more effective.

Critical Community Needs

The last portion of the survey asked participants to identify the top 5 critically unmet needs among low-income residents of Tacoma. Per the instructions, participants numbered their suggestions 1-5, with 1 being the most important. Themes emerged from the responses of participants. The themes became discrete categories under which all participant responses

were tabulated. The categories were ranked from most important to least important, dependent upon how many times they were mentioned by participants.

Survey results indicate the top 5 critically unmet community needs in order of importance are as follows:

- 1. Educational & Employment Services for Youth & Adults (n=37)**
- 2. Transportation (n=33)**
- 3. Affordable Housing (n=30)**
- 4. Services & Housing for Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults (n=28)**
- 5. Greater Access to Mental Health Care (n=15) & Medical Care (n=15)**

For the purposes of this study, we will discuss participant recommendations regarding the aforementioned top 5 community needs; however, it is worthy to note the additional community needs that made the top 10:

- 6. Shelters (n=10)**
- 7. Childcare (n=9)**
- 8. Basic Needs (n=8)**
- 9. Culturally Competent Services (n=7)**
- 10. Greater Access to Emergency Funds for Clients (n=5)**

Educational & Employment Services for Youth & Adults

Participants often grouped education and employment together in their identification of community needs. This illustrates the recognition that gainful employment is crucial to self-reliance, and education is a primary factor in gaining and maintaining employment at a livable wage.

Within this category, many participants identified the need for supportive services for low-income youth and young adults. High quality after-school programs, evening activities for youth, more opportunities for creative expression in the arts, mentoring, and professional/vocational skills training related directly to job opportunities emerged as critical needs. In conjunction with the aforementioned needs for youth and young adults, survey

participants mentioned that youth and young adult programs must include quality assessments and clear objectives.

Participants also identified the need for greater access to job retraining, especially for older adults who are in the workforce a lot longer than they originally planned. Several participants suggested greater investment in workforce development activities that result in soft skills, basic educational skills, and technical skills as possible solutions. Also cited, was the need for greater investment in case management to ensure that clients, who for a variety of reasons have difficulty accessing mainstream services, are linked to resources while engaged in workforce development activities. Listed below are additional recommendations offered by participants:

- “[I] recommend that the City continues to prioritize economic development activities that would bring new employment opportunities.”
- “So many of the human services issues are linked directly to economic development. If we could build new or convert more existing housing stock to affordability by low-income folks, some jobs may be generated and the affordability issue resolved.”
- “Employment assistance programs with bilingual staff [is needed]”

Transportation

A significant number of survey participants identified transportation as a critical need in our community and a growing problem for low-income individuals and families. Lack of adequate and reliable transportation can provoke insurmountable barriers for individuals desperately wanting to move into the workforce. Without reliable and adequate transportation, it is difficult for clients to search for jobs, get to jobs in remote locations away from bus lines, access human services, or transport children to daycare. Jobs in more populated areas of Tacoma served readily by public transportation during the day are unreachable without a car during second and third shifts. One participant commented, “We need more bus services to areas that have employment opportunities. For example, at the casino in Fife, night workers have had to walk from Fife to Tacoma in the middle of night because nothing is available. Most people start in that position.” Without transportation, the efforts to find a decent job that allows one to support self and family are often truncated for low-income individuals and families. Participants also commented that for older adults and individuals with disabilities, transportation is problematic.

Participants offered many recommendations to help remediate the transportation crisis. Listed below are samples of participants' quotes that represent the various recommendations offered:

- “I recommend that the City, County, and transit agencies examine ways to make public transit more user-friendly and accessible for low-income and underserved populations.”
- “Work to coordinate the different kinds of transportation that are available so that trips for different purposes can be shared if they are going the same direction. Work with funders to loosen up rules so parity can be negotiated in paying for shared transportation activities. This might provide more availability of transportation while cutting down on transportation costs.”
- “Negotiate with public transportation providers to offer assistance to low-income families seeking to connect with community resources.”
- “Vouchers for bus services including increased routes (or frequency) connecting low-income areas with schools, colleges, community centers, and hubs.”
- “Review where bus routes have been eliminated and work with the community to come up with alternatives.”
- “More transit options [are needed]. When routes do not have large ridership, use accessible vans and other lower-cost vehicles.”

Affordable Housing

Many Tacoma residents do not have the income to afford housing on the private market. For example, in Pierce County, a one-bedroom apartment at 2012 Fair Market Rent values (FMR) is \$745.00 per month and a two-bedroom \$929.00 per month, not even affordable to a full-time minimum wage worker. According to HUD standards, rent is affordable when it amounts to 30% of the household’s income. To afford the FMR for the two-bedroom apartment, a household would need an annual income of about \$37,200 or the full time equivalent of \$17.98/hour. This is in contrast to the average renter earning approximately \$12.50/hr and the state’s minimum wage being \$9.04/hr.

The findings in this community provider survey corroborate the City of Tacoma’s Affordable Housing Policy and Advisory Group’s finding that the city lacks a sufficient amount of affordable housing units for its residents. It is estimated that Tacoma needs an additional 14,000 affordable housing units for the current population of low-income households who are excessively rent burdened.¹⁰ There appears to be an opportunity to review the aforementioned

¹⁰ City of Tacoma Affordable Housing Policy and Advisory Group: Report, 2010).

report and the findings in this report to identify coordination strategies to address the need for affordable housing in Tacoma.

Furthermore, community service providers identified a need for additional permanent supportive housing opportunities. For people with behavioral and physical health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance use, it is difficult to maintain stable housing without supportive services. One participant commented, “Keeping people housed should be the priority and making sure they have access to supports is one key to keeping people from cycling into homelessness again.”

Below is a sample of participant recommendations:

- “Required cultural competency training around LGBTQ issues for all shelter and low income housing providers.”
- “There needs to be city funding for permanent housing. We serve people that will return to homelessness if they are not able to stay stably housed and our services keep them housed. But, currently the City of Tacoma is not looking to fund permanent housing which can impact what wrap around and supportive services we can provide.”
- “We currently have a HUGE opportunity to improve the number and quality of affordable housing units...low prices, low interest rates...now is a unique time in our history to be putting money into affordable housing stock. This is a “basic stability” issue which is critical to the success of young children.”
- “Clearing house of landlords that are willing to work with the difficult population that we serve with disabilities and mental health/chemical dependency issue.”

Services & Housing for Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults

Survey participants cited the urgent need for services and housing for unaccompanied youth and young adults. Youth homelessness in the City of Tacoma is an invisible, yet dramatic, social problem. Over 3,000 unaccompanied youth and young adults experience prolonged homelessness at any given time in Pierce County, with approximately 1,000 being highly vulnerable youth under the age of 18.¹¹ They are often living in abandoned buildings, wooded rural encampments, couch surfing with friends, or, if they are over the age of 18, living in shelters with older adults. These circumstances amplify risks to a host of maladaptive coping mechanisms such as sexual exploitation, substance abuse, and criminal activity.

¹¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012

Preliminary data from the Pierce County Landscape Assessment of Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult Homelessness (2012) reveals that the majority of unaccompanied youth and young adults come from highly dysfunctional and often single parent households affected by generational cycles of poverty and parental substance abuse. Many youth and young adults report leaving home due to emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse. The parents of these youth, often enmeshed in their own difficulties, have abandoned them, leaving them to desperately struggle on their own. Corroborating with national data, a disproportionate number of unaccompanied youth and young adults are of color; thus, underscoring the need for culturally relevant services.¹² In addition, LGBTQ youth are disproportionately affected by homelessness, with these youth reporting that their parents are often unable to cope with their sexual or gender orientation due to religious stigma, resulting in them being violently expelled from the home in a wake of shame and stigma.

Moreover, low-income students and at-risk populations, such as unaccompanied homeless youth and students of color, account for the majority of high school dropouts.¹³ Pierce County School Districts have identified approximately 400 unaccompanied youth that are struggling to stay in school in spite of their difficult circumstances. Another 100 are estimated to be in school but not yet identified by Pierce County School Districts as homeless, thereby failing to receive special services that are federally mandated to remove barriers to education. For the remaining 500 unaccompanied youth that have dropped-out of school, Pierce County school districts loses an estimated \$4.8 million a year in revenue, with Tacoma, Puyallup, and Clover Park School Districts most affected.¹⁴

Despite these statistics, Tacoma lacks a drop-in center and shelter for unaccompanied youth and young adults. The only safe option for unaccompanied youth is to leave their community in hopes of procuring shelter and services in Seattle, which already has an overburdened system. This underscores the urgent need for a drop-in center and youth shelter where youth can receive family reunification support, culturally competent services, food, and shelter in a safe environment targeted at meeting the unique need of homeless youth and young adult.

Participants offered many viable solutions in order to address this critical unmet community need. Below is a sample of participants' recommendations in their own voice:

- "These areas should be made a priority with aggressive funding[.]"

¹² National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012

¹³ Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010

¹⁴ Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2012

- “Many youth are also lacking basic housing resources. We need a drop-in center for youth and young adults where they can take showers and receive loose case management.”
- “ [There is a need for] a centralized multi-service building that is youth friendly and has immediate access to critical services (showers, washer and dryer, food, clothing, food stamps, I.D., transportation, employment, school enrollment, tutoring, etc.).
- “Work with community partners to provide housing for homeless youth. Examine the policy issues regarding the housing of youth who are unaccompanied by their parents.”
- “[There is a need for] city ordinances and policies that [offer incentives] to private developers [for] dedicating a percentage of their units in every project as affordable housing (for homeless youth and young adults) in exchange for tax credits.”
- “Mental health counseling and disability services are greatly needed to mobilize these young adults.”

Greater Access to Mental Health Care & Medical Care

Survey participants identified access to mental health and medical care as equally important. One of the themes that emerged is a need for effective dual diagnosis treatment that integrates mental health and substance abuse interventions, such as having the same clinician or team of clinicians address a client’s mental health and substance use issues in a coordinated fashion. In an effective treatment system, the treatment should appear seamless to the patient, with a unified philosophy, set of goals and recommendations. Along these lines, one participant mentioned the need for treatment of other equally destructive addictions such as “sex, porn, internet, and gambling.”

Several participants commented on the need for more integrated and collaborative community based mental health services:

- “[I] recommend that the City helps to facilitate networks and collaborations among providers that would streamline service delivery for high-needs clients.”
- “A complete overhaul of mental health services with a community wrap around model that offers more day treatment options, emergency crisis care and ongoing structured support. This program should not be administered by a single for profit entity, but should be organized around a small community based core set of providers (in other words, small enough to be nimble, but requires collaboration and inclusion).”

Participants cited the dental and vision needs of clients are often marginalized. A local service provider in the survey passionately stated, “It is easy for [many] to think dental and vision are not important issues. If your teeth are rotten who will hire you? If you are hired and have to continuously take time off due to problems with your teeth, you lose your job. If you need diabetic test strips and DSHS doesn’t pay for them, then what? If your glasses are five years old and no longer work for you, how are you going to see to get a job and become self-sufficient?”

Listed are other recommendations participants offered to ameliorate problematic access to mental health and medical care:

- “Voucher programs with collaborating state licensed therapists at a reduced rate.”
- “Health prevention programs related to substance abuse, hepatitis, HIV, and other health conditions integrated into existing successful programs, employment, transitional housing, etc.”
- “Collaborative partnerships between public and private organizations to serve uninsured and ensure access to critical health care services.”

The community needs identified in the survey by human services providers and funders are an opportunity for the city to determine continuation of current strategies and/or consideration of additional strategies to address these emerging needs.

Secondary Data Sources

1. United Way: Community Indicators:

<http://www.indicators.uwpc.org/>

This data source includes PIT (point-in-time count) data of homeless individuals and families for the last several years, other community indicators relating to DSHS clients, seniors, children, domestic violence, children and crime.

2. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI):

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=188&reportLevel=District&orgLinkId=188&yrs=&year=2010-11>

This data source affords the ability to compare statistical and demographic information of Tacoma School District with other school districts, and Washington State as a whole. Link leads to Tacoma School District “report card” where there is data from both 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. Data indicates that Tacoma has a higher dropout rate than the state average (9.3 % vs. 4.6%), lower adjusted graduation rate for 2010 compared to the State average (51.5% vs. 72.7%), as well as significantly higher utilization of free or reduced meal programs (60.1% vs. 43.7%). Other achievement data are included enabling users to compare variables by race, grade levels, and school years.

3. Census Information:

<http://www.census.gov>

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table

2010 Census information includes the American Fact Finder data (second link). Includes numerous types of census information data that can be downloaded into excel or as a PDF, from national to local information. This data source includes statistical data on hundreds of topics relating to demographics, geography, education, economics, employment, etc.

4. Washington State Department of Social & Health Services:

http://clientdata.rda.dshs.wa.gov/ReportServer/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?%2fCSDBAnyYear%2fLandscape_GeotypeClientSvcsByAge

DSHS Client data contains information on clients and types of services utilized. Reports include statewide, county, and some municipality level information on clients. Service data includes number of clients served, unit costs, and total costs per service category.

5. Department of Early Learning: <http://www.del.wa.gov/>

http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/research/docs/LicensedChildCareInWashingtonState_2010.pdf

This source contains dozens of reports with information regarding childcare in our state. A 2010 report regarding “Licensed Child Care in Washington State” contains updated statistics on centers and home childcare sites, including how many children receive out of home childcare, costs, subsidies, etc.

6. Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov

This data source includes large amounts of data relating to labor/workforce information, such as wages by area, occupation, race, age. Also included is the most current *Demographic Characteristics of Labor Force* report.

7. Tacoma, Lakewood, Pierce County Continuum of Care Plan to End Homelessness:

<http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/comsvcs/homeless.htm>

This integrated plan offers robust data on the effects of homelessness in Tacoma, as well as surrounding areas. Plan offers an in-depth assessment and strategies for remediating homelessness in this region.

8. Gates Foundation: Early Learning in Washington State April 2011:

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/topics/Pages/early-learning.aspx>

This data source provides research regarding the importance of early learning/pre-kindergarten and how that affects school readiness of Washington State kids. The source also offers statistical and resource information illustrating the negative effects on kids who start kindergarten lacking basic skills: they are more likely to stay behind in academic achievement

leading to difficulties in adult life. Early intervention programs such as “Thrive by 5,” (program implemented in Tacoma and listed in Strategic Plan) assists in developing these early skills needed.

9. Urban Institute “Kids Share” 2011 Report on Federal Expenditures on Children:

<http://www.urban.org/publications/412367.html>

Provides indicators and information regarding declining Federal expenditures on children and increasing expectations/burdens on states to meet needs and/or programs for children.

10. Brookings Institute: Housing Costs, Zoning and Access to High Scoring Schools Report:

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2012/0419_school_inequality_rothwell.aspx

This research elucidates the effects of zoning and housing costs on the accessibility to high scoring schools for low-income families. Metropolitan area data for Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue combined. Zoning restrictions can increase the gap of academic achievement due to higher costs of housing near high performance schools.

11. Community Center for Education Results:

<http://www.ccedresults.org/the-project/>

<http://www.ccedresults.org/media/baseline-report/>

The Community Center for Education Results, in conjunction with the Gates Foundation, University of Washington, Brookings Institute, and others specifically target the Puget Sound Region in improving educational outcomes. Pertinent information can be found in *The Roadmap Project: Baseline Report* (Dec. 2011) and *The Roadmap Project: Technical Report* (Feb. 2012).