

ATTACHMENT 1
Community Services Block Grant
Community Needs Assessment
December 2014

Summary

Supporting families working to improve their lives and strengthening the community safety net will be critical in addressing the needs of low-income and vulnerable residents in Douglas County. Although each low-income and vulnerable family faces a unique set of barriers access to transportation, the high cost of housing and the lack of programs and supportive services which create supportive cultures that enable families to obtain self-sufficiency are identified as foundational community needs.

Methodology

County staff gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from the following sources:

Community Survey – A total of 388 responded to a Community Needs survey administered by County staff from September 2013 through January 2014. The survey was made available online through the County website and in paper through a variety of organizations that provide service to low-income individuals across the county. Of the respondents, 80% reported earning an annual household income of less than \$43,600.

Provider Survey – A total of 40 surveys were collected from agencies and organizational staff that serve the interests of low-income and vulnerable residents across Douglas County. This survey was conducted during September 2013 – January 2014.

Demographic Data – Demographic data was gathered using the Community Action Partnership's community needs assessment online tool, prepared on November 18, 2014.

Provider Forum – Staff from 14 agencies participated in a Provider Forum on November 19, 2014. Agencies present included: Douglas County Human Services, Douglas County Community Development, Douglas County School District, Douglas Elbert Task Force, Continuum of Colorado, Crisis Center, Douglas County Parenting, Central Colorado Area Health Education Center, Castle Rock St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Charities, Arapahoe / Douglas Works!, Arapahoe Douglas Mental Health, and Family Tree. This forum presented information gathered in the Community and Provider surveys. Based on this information, participants identified community needs and the community resources currently available to address these needs.

Additional sources of data considered in the development of this community needs assessment include the 2014 Point In Time Survey of Homelessness, the 2014-2018 Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Plan, the 2014 Colorado Kids Count, and the Douglas County School District's Title X (McKinney Vento) Homeless Student Services program.

Target Population

The boundaries of Douglas County, Colorado define the geographical limits of the target population. This includes the incorporated jurisdictions of Castle Pines, Castle Rock, Larkspur, Lone Tree, and Parker and the unincorporated regions including Franktown, Highlands Ranch, Louviers, Perry Park, Roxborough, and Sedalia.

Findings

Demographic Data

Douglas County's population has increased 63% from 2000 to 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau). During the same time period the number of people living in poverty inside the county more than tripled (up 385%), from 3,343 to 12,865. By total population, the rate of poverty increased from 1.7% to 4.3% during the same time period. Female head of households make up 46% of those living below poverty whereas 42% come from two-parent households and the remaining 12% come from male head of house families.

According to the American Community Survey a total of 3,762, or 4.4%, of children under the age of 18 live in poverty. This means that children constitute the largest population segment, by percentage, living in poverty. By comparison, the poverty rate of adults between the ages of 18 and 64 is 3.9% and those age 65 and over are an identical 3.9%.

In general Douglas County is highly educated with 63% of the population having attained an Associate's degree or higher. The median household income for the county is \$101,108 which is 74% higher than the statewide median. Unemployment is on the decline, down to 4.1% in August of 2014 from 7.1% in August of 2010.

The median priced single family home has increased 16% since 2009. The cost of renting has also increased. A median priced apartment is up from \$942 in 2008 to \$1,199 in 2013. Vacancy rates have fluctuated over the last 5 years ranging from a low of 2.9% to high of 7.1%. These fluctuations appear to be seasonal in nature with higher vacancy rates during the 1st and 4th quarters of each year.

Community Survey

Respondents of the Community Survey were asked to identify the top three services that they felt would help residents obtain and maintain self-sufficiency. Scores were weighted based on respondent ranking. The top six responses identified were food assistance, housing assistance, transportation, healthcare, job placement and childcare. When asked which services would most likely help to improve their current situation the top answers were affordable housing (31%), transportation (13%) and job placement (12%).

Of the respondents indicating that they were unemployed, half have been unemployed for over 2 years, 39% had been unemployed for one year or less. When asked the highest level of education only 7.5% indicated that they had not obtained at least, a GED or high school diploma.

When follow up questions were asked regarding housing 54% were renting an apartment, condo, town home, single-family house or similar. Home ownership accounted for 24% of the responses while 17% indicated that they did not have a permanent place to live. When asked to identify the amount of rent or mortgage a family could adequately afford so that there is money available for food, utilities, transportation, etc. 56% identified a cost of less than \$750 a month. An additional 22% identified a range of \$750-\$1,000 as being affordable. When asked to rate the availability of affordable housing in Douglas County 56% responded that the supply was below average. The top housing issue identified in providing safe and secure housing for low-income residents was affordable housing.

Respondents who did not have safe or stable housing were asked to identify the factors that contributed to them losing or not being able to secure housing. The top 4 responses included: loss of a job, unable to pay rent, bad credit and family break up or divorce.

Access to transportation was identified as a high need across the county. Just over 25% of respondents do not own their own vehicle. Most of these relied on family or friends to meet their transportation needs. When asked if Douglas County had adequate types of transportation opportunities to meet their needs 50% responded no while 30% were unsure. When asked which types of transportation was most needed in Douglas County, regional and local bus services were most often identified.

Provider Survey

Staff and leaders from agencies across the county were given the opportunity to identify the top three gaps in service as it relates to the low-income and vulnerable residents. All 40 respondents identified housing as being a need in the county. Transportation was identified by 31 of the 40 respondents while all other options were identified by less than 10 respondents. When asked to rank the top three services that would help residents in Douglas County obtain and maintain self-sufficiency the top four answers were housing assistance, childcare, job placement, and transportation.

Provider Forum

Sixteen participants from 14 agencies participated in the Provider Forum. Participants were broken into three workgroups to address self-sufficiency, employment and housing. Each group was asked to identify a need, brainstorm why that need existed, identify current community resources working to address the need and suggest new ideas on how to address the need in the community.

The group focused on self-sufficiency identified that residents lack opportunities to reach self-sufficiency. Three areas were identified as contributing to this need. They were adequate employment, client culture and agency culture. The barriers to adequate employment included childcare, transportation and job skill training or education. Generational poverty, history of trauma, the crisis spiral and the lack of long term supportive services were named as contributing to the client culture. Agency culture issues were identified as lack of intensive case management, lack of supportive services and "one-size fits all" approaches to client need.

This group identified Colorado Childcare Assistance Program, Temporary Aid for Needy Families, Arapahoe Douglas Works and Douglas County Cares as programs already working to address these issues. They suggested that expanded services might include off hours childcare, an increase in higher education opportunities available in our community, better transportation and increasing the capacity of Douglas County Cares (DC Cares) program.

The second focus group worked to address employment. They proposed that there is a lack of jobs that pay a sustainable wage for county residents. They indicated that the types of jobs available, the qualifications needed to access higher paying jobs and employer based incentives are all barriers causing this need. They felt that the rise of retail and service oriented jobs is a positive but that on their own, these jobs do not typically pay a wage sufficient for residents to be able to afford the opportunity to live in Douglas County. They also cited community barriers such as lack of public transportation and access to technology as reasons low-income residents could not obtain or increase their employment. This group suggested that building and bolstering transportation and educational and job training systems were critical to resident

success. Additionally, they indicated a need for employer-based incentives to create jobs that pay a higher wage.

The third work group focused their efforts on housing. Three critical needs were identified, affordable housing, transitional housing and emergency shelter. Their work was based on the notion that Douglas County has an inadequate supply of housing that is accessible to low-income residents. Currently there are only 2 community supportive housing units and the only emergency shelter available is for victims of domestic violence. They suggested that more units be built and that the community invest in wrap around and supportive systems to assist residents in moving beyond emergency shelter and transitional housing into affordable and market rate housing options. They also identified multiple barriers to obtaining permanent housing for those with poor credit and criminal backgrounds.

Needs

Residents from every region in Douglas County need access to services which will assist them in moving towards self-sufficiency. No single demographic indicator suggests a targeted response to a particular community is necessary. However, single parents with children and aging adults, especially those with fixed incomes, are among the most vulnerable in our community. Through this process the following needs which impact residents across the county have been identified as:

1. There is a lack of available and accessible housing options for low-income residents.
2. There is a lack of transportation options for vulnerable residents.
3. There is a lack of supportive services to assist residents seeking to obtain self-sufficiency through employment.

Community Resources

Housing

Housing that is attainable and affordable for low-income and vulnerable residents is being addressed by many agencies across the county. The Douglas County Housing Partnership (DCHP) has an established program that provides down payment assistance for residents looking to purchase a home. Additionally, in the last year DCHP has purchased two condominiums that have been identified as Community Supportive Housing units for DC Cares clients. In 2014, Private Activity Bonds were used to help finance two housing projects. One project was an income qualified apartment complex with 156 units of affordable rental housing available. At the time of opening, 100% of the available units were under contract with an interest list of over 2,000 families. The second project retained 96 units of affordable rental units for a 30-year period. Funds were used to acquire and rehabilitate these units for future use. In addition, an affordable housing community for seniors funded through Low Income Housing Tax Credits and CDBG funds created 90 units. This project is scheduled to come online in early 2015 but demand has already exceeded capacity. In the last seven years, no new Housing Choice Vouchers have been made available to Douglas County residents and this trend is expected to continue.

Numerous agencies across the county including various non-profits and faith based organizations provide emergency rent and housing assistance. This assistance is typically used to avoid evictions and does not provide for more than 30 days of rent stability or a few nights in

a motel. Residents looking for long-term shelter or emergency housing are referred to agencies in the greater Denver metro area.

Transportation

Transportation services are limited in Douglas County. The Regional Transportation District does provide bus and light rail service to the northern part of the County, and limited demand response services (Access-a-Ride and Call-n-Ride) in Highlands Ranch, Lone Tree and Parker. Lone Tree is also served by a local free shuttle service within its city limits. Castle Rock residents are served through a taxi voucher program that offers distance limited travel (up to 3 miles) for the purposes of work, medical and grocery trips at a subsidized cost. Transportation for special populations, including seniors and those with disabilities, is provided on demand through various grants and non-profit providers.

The County is currently undertaking a Transit Demand Analysis to recommend priorities for addressing the lack of transportation options across the county. Douglas County Transit Solutions, the Local Coordinating Council, and the County Mobility Manager are leading this study.

Supportive Services

The majority of service providers and programs across the county working to assist low-income and vulnerable populations focus their services on meeting emergency needs. These services range from food banks which provide one week of food to rent assistance to avoid foreclosure, limited hotel vouchers and assistance to avoid utility shut off. A handful of programs, such as Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), Douglas County Cares, the Crisis Center and the Douglas County Youth Initiative focus on long-term solutions and typically work to assist residents for six months or longer. These programs focus on wrap around or case managed services that work more intensively with families.

Recommendations

As a result of this community assessment, the following recommendations are presented as opportunities to create a more efficient and effective system of care for those working to obtain self-sufficiency in Douglas County.

1. Increase the number of and capacity of programs in the community which create supportive cultures and enable families to obtain self-sufficiency through employment.
2. Provide more long-term, facilitated support of families working to obtain self-sufficiency through employment.
3. Provide services which support individuals seeking to increase their employment.
4. Provide services which stabilize housing for families working to obtain self-sufficiency through employment.

These opportunities are each focused on creating a community culture where families are supported while working to obtain self-sufficiency by increasing their employment. This may be moving from unemployment to being employed, obtaining additional employment or moving into a higher paying job. These accomplishments form the foundation for self-sufficiency but families need the support of the community to overcome barriers and achieve this outcome. These barriers may include the need to increase individual skills and education, meet childcare needs, address physical or mental health concerns, improve financial management, encourage supportive relationships, obtain access to housing and help clients overcome past choices and

decisions. The community safety net will play an important role in supporting these families as the work to improve their lives.